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ようこそ実力  
Welcome to the Classroom of the Second-year  
至上主義の教室へ 2年生編





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ようこそ**実力至上主義の教室**へ**2**年生編

Welcome to the Classroom of the Second-year

衣笠彰梧 × トモセシユンサク



ほう せん かつ おみ  
**宝泉和臣**

新1年Dクラス。  
見た目通り粗暴  
な男。

「いいぜいいぜ。こんな学校にまで  
足を運んだかいがあったつもんだ」

し ば かつ のり  
**司馬克典**

曲者揃いの新1年  
Dクラスに着任し  
た担任教師。

「分かってるなら、早く散れ。  
喧嘩は往来でするものではない」

「私は暴力に  
屈しませんから」

あや せつ ぽん  
**七瀬翼**

新1年生。非常  
に社交的で丁寧  
な物震の少女だ  
がクラスはDク  
ラス。

「おい。優秀なパートナーをお探しなら、ここにいるけどー？」

「あなたの名前は？」

「私は1年Aクラスの天沢一夏。」

堀北先輩と同じく学力判定はAなんだよね」

ギョルっぽい感じの見た目にそぐわず、  
頭の良い生徒だ。

「上位を狙うんだったら組んであげよっか？」







# **CLASSROOM OF THE ELITE**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Year Volume 1**

Shougo Kinugasa

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# [ PROLOGUE ]

## SECRET MANOEUVRES

It was about two months ago, on a certain day of February.

In a meeting room inside a facility located in Tokyo, a man who seems to be in his 40s, Tsukishiro, slowly read the material displayed on the screen and explained the situation. The one who was listening to it was a young teenage child. The child is a 15-year-old teenager who will soon be enrolled into a certain high school.

However, the true nature of this child is not a mere adolescent.

They are a specially educated person who grew up in a top-secret facility called the White Room.

“Here lists the detailed data of all the 156 second-year students, and Kiyotaka Ayanokouji is among them. You’ve already memorized everything in your head, right?”

Tsukishiro, who was standing in front of a projected screen, disclosed all the information about the school’s student materials which were collected over the years. It ranged from their names, date of birth, past schools, as well as their close relatives, previous exam grades, and even all the way to their friends. This is a top-secret meeting with all sorts of detailed materials that even a normal homeroom teacher wouldn’t be able to see.

“I think you already know this, but the important thing is to make Ayanokouji drop out of school in April and bring him back to the White Room. We can’t delay the plan any longer but do try to go about it as smart as you can. We don’t want things to go public. If our plans were to be reached into the government’s ears, then he’d... No, your



teacher's name would be damaged.”

After being briefed by Tsukishiro, the listener slowly raised their hand.

“Do you mean to not stand out carelessly?”

“Yes,” Tsukishiro replied, “That’s why it’s not possible for a mere student to dive head-first into this and get away cleanly. I’ll back you up as much as possible, but from now on, Sakayanagi’s faction will start to act more vigilantly as well, so we shouldn’t be acting carelessly.”

The child has basically gotten a good grasp of the situation, but the expression they made contained a certain dissatisfaction towards their given task.

“I’ll assume that you’re not fully convinced yet since you’re making that face.”

Tsukishiro looked at the picture of Ayanokouji behind him before turning to face the lone teenager in front of him.

“That bou... don’t you like touting about Ayanokouji’s outstanding work? Not only was I sent in to regulate things, but the White Room, which was about to restart its activities, were forced to a halt because of him. This might be considered a luxury to the children in the White Room, and it is quite generous of Ayanokouji to delay their ‘experiment,’ but for the people who have grown up in the same facility, won’t they feel a bit humiliated by his actions?”

Tsukishiro continued to explain this point of his carefully, while at the same time emphasizing his annoyance towards him.

Basically, his idea was to try and bring out Ayanokouji’s ability by adding fuel to the competition.

That’s because this person named Kiyotaka Ayanokouji is a masterpiece.

Every time his situation is explained in words, a certain emotion lurks into the mind of those who listened.

Tsukishiro, who was showing a poker face, is the only person to have their emotions misread.

He's been taught that the people who grew up in the White Room didn't like their experiences.

"Become an existence beyond that of Kiyotaka Ayanokouji."

In a third party's view who did not grow up in that facility, the feeling of 'hatred' towards this person could not be understood.

Sometimes, the hatred would swell to the point where it can't be suppressed anymore, and it would evoke the thought that the mentioned masterpiece was just a runaway in the end.

"We've already prepared a stage for you. All you need to do is show your ability to the fullest. The data I gave you should be flawless. If you have this much ability in you, then it won't be a problem for you, would it?"

After the explanation—and the provocation that was somehow brushed off by the listener—Tsukishiro turned off the screen.

The room that was once covered in darkness, was now enveloped in light once the ceiling lights had turned on.

"Well, since you don't have any other questions, let's get going. Time is precious, after all."

After receiving those instructions, the listener turned around with their back facing Tsukishiro and left the room as if nothing had ever happened.

Tsukishiro felt a slight chill after seeing this calm attitude of his only spectator.

Intuition called for the wrong words in his explanation.

However, it's not possible to retract those words which have already been spoken.

"There's one thing I forgot to confirm."

The person leaving the room stopped in their tracks, and Tsukishiro continued to talk while the person's back was still turned towards him.

"You didn't hide anything from me, did you?"

Even people on the same side as him could understand that this organization is not monumental.

If the person doesn't agree with the first and foremost point, then

there wouldn't be any more reason to continue.

Tsukishiro needed confirmation for that.

Without looking back, the person quietly walked away, not before performing a small nod.

After the person left the room, Tsukishiro turned off the lights once again and displayed the image of Kiyotaka Ayanokouji on the screen.

It contained all the data of Ayanokouji recorded from the time he stayed in the White Room.

"I don't like using this word loosely, but... he's definitely a monster."

The measure of his academic ability, and not to mention his physical capabilities; they are easily comparable to that of a superior adult's, and maybe even more so than that.

He's had enough experience and achievements to prove that he—without hesitation—win in a fight against a professional in combat, even if they had the upper hand.

"A battle of those who were artificially nurtured from the White Room against naturally-born geniuses... I wonder who would win if they fought head-on?"

Of course, Tsukishiro already has a solid answer to that.

However, that answer isn't absolute.

"To hunt, or to be hunted. Even if it's a game between children, it's going to be a heck of an interesting one."

As an adult himself, Tsukishiro didn't waver. He never would. Just do what you've been told to. That is your purpose.

(TLN: The gender of the WR student has not been confirmed, so for general assumption we will consider the student to be a male until otherwise confirmed.)



# [ 1 ]

## THE TRUE MEANING OF ABILITY

It has been a long time since society became familiar with the term ‘ability’ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Japan was at a turning point as the world faced various problems.

Those problems range from declining birth rate, an aging population, environmental problems, along with a declining sense of nationalism. Overall, Japan was just full of declines.

Thus, in order to rebuild these efforts from the ground up, the government had begun to emphasize their work on human resource development.

And through those efforts, a certain high school was born.

To attract a wide variety of students from all over the country and to train world-class children in order to lead the future.

That is the purpose of the Tokyo Metropolitan Advanced Nurturing High School.

The biggest selling point of this school would be that it does not question the student’s grades when determining their eligibility to enter its curriculum.

Instead, the students are selected according to the school’s own criteria. The ability of each student isn’t solely based off their grades, but instead are scored on multiple aspects.

For example, those who can study but are bad at communicating with others. Those who excel at sports but aren’t the brightest.

Even the ones without any special traits. They are all accepted into the school to partake in the same curriculum together.

It is a mechanism that a normal high school wouldn't have thought of in the first place.

Students with such diverse personalities are made to live in groups and compete on a class-by-class basis.

The purpose of doing this is to let the students fight in a competitive society and to create the groundwork necessary to survive as a group.

And thus, the students who are stamped with the seal of ineligibility will trace the fate of withdrawal without mercy.

Nobody can survive in this school just by studying or exercising.

The first year is divided into four classes, from class A to class D.

At the time of admission, approximately 40 students are allocated to each class. Thus, bringing the grand total up to 160 students.

In a more detailed analysis, this school is wildly different compared to other high schools.

First, students will not be allowed to contact the outside for all three years until graduation. At the same time, they will also be barred from leaving school grounds and are forced to live in the dormitories.

This sounds more like a prison than a school.

To contradict this fact, the school – which boasts a large amount of area – have prepared facilities for students, so that there is no need for the students to worry about living essentials. In the large commercial facility dedicated to students and school officials called Keyaki Mall, you can find just about everything you'll ever need, ranging from cafes, consumer electronics retailers, all the way to saloons. If you want something else not found in this place, then the Internet is the second-best option.

In addition to that, the money required for daily living purchases are provided in the form of 'private points,' and they are used instead of actual cash in an easy-to-understand one-point one-yen basis.

However, these private points aren't infinite.

Each month, private points are allocated to students according to

the amount of ‘class points’ their class has. For each class point, 100 private points will be allocated to the students that are in that class. For example, if a class has 786 class points, then the students in that class will get 78,600 private points each month.

In other words, to accumulate enough private points necessary to live a comfortable school life, class points must be secured first.

Fortunately, there are several ways to gain class points, but the most common way to obtain them is through a special challenge given to all students in that grade called ‘special exams.’

Basically, students from each class will compete against each other, and whoever performs the best will gain class points, while the lowest performers will lose class points. Let’s say your class has 1000 class points. That means, you’ll be allocated 100,000 private points each month.

If you along with your class continuously underperforms in these special exams, then your class points will inevitably drop down to zero. Thus, the private points you’ll get each month will also be zero.

The relationship between class points and private points is probably a mechanism for uniting the students with different ways of thinking by fighting together as a group to gain class points. Having enough class points will also mean guaranteeing a fulfilling school life.

However, that is not the only charm of the Advanced Nurturing High School.

The biggest selling point of this school is to graduate while enrolled in class A. The victorious students can go on to even higher education and get their preferred jobs. In extreme terms, whether it is a university for the elite, or a high-end company, they will almost always be allowed a pass.

That said, life certainly isn’t that easy. If your boss clearly sees that you are not performing as they expected you to, then you’ll be kissing the company goodbye.

Still, there is no doubt that the perks given by this school is a very attractive favour.



Many people wonder if that is the main reason why the Advanced Nurturing High School is such a high-profile school.

Kiyotaka Ayanokouji is a student who attends this elite school.

And after a little over a year of studying in this school, his second year will soon begin.

As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, Ayanokouji's class, which is class D, has 275 class points. The students in class D will only receive an amount of private points just shy of 30,000. Meanwhile, class A, which is led by Sakayanagi, is currently in first place in terms of class points, with an overwhelming lead of 1,119 class points.

Following that is class B which was led by Ichinose. Their class currently has 542 class points. And just behind that, Ryuen's class C has 540. They are so close that the difference in class points almost seems insignificant.

Although the difference of class points between class D and the other classes is quite big, there are still numerous chances for Ayanokouji's class to make a comeback.

In the next year, the amount of gap between each class that can be reduced through their efforts will be key to winning the game.

## A NEW STAGE

The long yet deceptively short spring break is finally over, and the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Metropolitan Advanced Nurturing High School has arrived.

On this day, all of us will be leaving the classroom that we have been so familiar with over the past year and will be moving to a new classroom now that we are sophomores.

At first glance, everything seems the same, from the chairs, desks and the plain walls; but somehow, it still feels different to me. The first thing everyone was waiting for when we entered this classroom was the message that was apparently *displayed* on the blackboard.

“Please wait in the same seats as the previous year.”

Until last year, what was called a ‘blackboard,’ was utilized by writing on it using chalk by a teacher.

However, the blackboard in front of me could be called a ‘black screen’ instead of an actual blackboard.

To put it simply, a large electronic monitor has now replaced the traditional blackboards.

From this year onwards, we will be using this gigantic screen for day-to-day activities in class. Just like any new piece of technology, it has a certain shine to it that makes it seem precious.

The students who arrived at class after me all seemed to be at awe when they noticed the newly implemented ‘blackboard.’ Anyway, as instructed by the screen, I headed straight to the back of the class, right up to the leftmost window, where a seemingly familiar seat welcomes

me. I sat down with a bit of excitement, only to be let down with the same view yet again.

When the time comes, the opening ceremony will be held in the gymnasium, same as last year's occasion.

Following that, the teacher in charge of our class will explain the schedule and necessary preparations for this fiscal year, lasting for an estimated two hours. After that, class will be dismissed in the morning.

As spring break has just ended, the students' minds seem to be prioritizing on elsewhere. Naturally, my friends – and most likely everyone else – who have not met each other for quite a while, are excited to see what their acquaintances were involved in during the holidays.

“Yo!”

While I was surfing the internet on my phone on my seat, I was called out by someone from my right.

No, it wasn't Horikita. Not in a million years would she greet someone with the words “Yo!”

The person who allegedly greeted me was my classmate, Miyake Akito. He is one of the people in the Ayanokouji Group who I get along with well.

“You know, I was a bit worried since you didn't show up in the group chat much during spring break,” expressed Akito.

It is true that during spring break, I had little to no interaction with the group.

Would it be a miracle to say that the conditions in the surrounding area was hustling and bustling, and that despite me being somewhat neglected, I was still approached by a classmate?

“Of course, there's no rule that states we must get together every time, but you're like the ‘leader’ of this group, so it wouldn't hurt to hang out with us a bit more, right? And most of all, Airi seemed to care a lot about you during spring break.”

Thinking about the feelings of the girls in the group, Akito gave me that piece of advice.



“Sorry, I’ll show my face a bit more onwards.”

“That’s okay. I’ll admit I did miss seeing you around, too.”

When a friend says that, it becomes a little bit painful. Still, I didn’t feel at guilt here.

As if he hadn’t intended on staying here for long, Akito raised his right hand as a gesture of goodbye and turned around to return to his seat, which was the same as last year’s.

I think he is a very good friend to have.

After that, since I didn’t want to fiddle around with my phone anymore, I decided to eavesdrop on some conversations going on in class.

From the topic of spring break earlier, it has moved on to the new first-year students.

Tomorrow will be the day when the entrance ceremony will be held and when the new freshmen will arrive.

Last year, class D was treated well after entering school, with no major conflicts happening during the first day.

All classes were immediately given 1000 class points after admission. In other words, it would be equal to 100,000 private points, which is equivalent to 100,000 yen in cash. The students were head over heels about their monthly allowance and bought one item after another. In addition to that, being late to class and even absences were commonplace, along with talking and dozing off in class.

On the other hand, serious students focused only on themselves and did not have to pay attention to their chaotic surroundings.

There may be several reasons why they were not acting properly, but it can be said that the school intended on leaving the problem children alone. If the teacher didn’t care, then why should the students either?

However, that could technically be counted as the first ‘special exam’ held by the school.

Whether or not the ability to notice what was going on is considered different from the compulsory education in elementary and middle

school, as a high school student, I was voluntarily trying to find out if I could take things for granted.

And, as a result, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May following that uncivilized month, our class points immediately fell to zero. Thus, the private points that were initially going to be transferred to us were also non-existent.

After that unforgettable day, as class 1-D took on several trials, their disjointed students slowly grew and developed a sense of unity, finally being able to crawl out of the rabbit hole they dug themselves in. At one point in time, we even managed to overtake class C, but at the end, we still fell back down to class D.

Despite countless exams and trials, we managed to gain 375 class points throughout the year. Although the difference between the current class points of class A and class D is unbearably large, in the past year, we remain as the class to gain the most class points out of any class.

Now that we have advanced to the second year, it will be important to know how much you can improve together in order to increase the class points.

“Oh, hey!”

I could hear the voice of a cheerful girl greeting her friends. Immediately after that, the girls who were greeted by that voice turned around one after another and returned the greeting. It was Karuizawa Kei who gathered all the girls together. The number of girls increased rapidly, and the same stories from before loop back to the beginning.

It was only the other day that I started going out with Kei, the leader of the girls in our class.

Only the two of us who know about our relationship.

As I recalled on the conversation that I was eavesdropping on, a sudden voice of surprise, similar of that to a shriek, resounded through the whole classroom. When I looked up, I immediately understood the real reason of the surprise.

Should it be said that such a reaction is natural when seeing the appearance of a certain classmate who has been going to school just

as everyone else here?

The female student, who was attracting all the attention, went straight to her seat – that is, the seat right next to mine – without responding to the surprise.

That long, beautiful black hair of hers is now gone, and has now been replaced with shoulder-length hair. It was even shorter than that.

This was the result of her finally reconciling with her brother, Manabu Horikita, and finally broke away from her past self, one where she was always chasing after the shadow of said brother. Thus, she cut her hair to show that she has changed.

I can't be surprised since I already know of that fact, but if this were to be my first sighting of her, then my reaction would have been the same as the people around me.

"Su-Suzune... You... That... Your hair... What's happened to your hair?!"

It was Ken Sudou who shouted out so hastily after seeing Horikita's new look. After all, he is the one who has fallen in love with her.

Yet another girl, who was puzzled by Horikita's sudden change, approached her as well.

"Horikita-san, I wouldn't have imagined this... Right, I was so surprised when I saw you!"

It was Kikyou Kushida, who is another classmate, and coincidentally from the same middle school as Horikita.

"I wonder, is it that strange that I cut my hair?"

Not only Sudou and Kushida, but also many other students who paid attention to Horikita's new hairstyle, were glared at by her cold eyes.

"No, no! I was just so surprised. Your new hairstyle changes your image a lot. Of course, I'm not saying that it looks bad at all. Short hair is nice too. Isn't that right?"

Although the impact of Horikita's change was strong for Sudou, the length of her hair isn't something he would be so trivial about. Rather, he readily accepted the new image of his preferred partner and showed

his support. Despite that, Sudou couldn't hide his puzzled appearance.

“Yeah, that's right... I think it suits you well. But what happened? Why did you decide to cut your hair?” Kushida asks.

The topic shifts slightly to find out Horikita's motive for cutting her hair.

“Come on, tell me! Why'd you cut it?”

Before Horikita could even answer, Sudou cut in with his impatient words.

“Let's just say... It was about a broken heart, and so on...”  
Horikita's answer was vague.



“Eh? A broken heart?”

“If I were to put it into more accurate terms, then I’d say it’s more of a declaration of independence.”

Horikita answered without putting much attention towards her hair to brush off the ‘broken heart’ statement of hers.

“Well, I guess that’s true. There’s no way you would have a broken heart, would you?”

Even though he says so, Sudou is still breaking out into a cold sweat.

“This year, since I’m a second-year student now, I’ve decided to fight as hard as I can in order to make class D rise higher. That’s why I wanted to do as much as I could handle.”

“That’s right. Well then... I think I’ll extend my hair instead,” Kushida claimed.

It is true that long hair is also cute, but the true motive behind extending her hair is much different from that.

Kushida is probably frustrated that she has the exact same hair length as the one person she hated now that Horikita has cut her hair short. No one would have guessed that was Kushida’s true intentions. I couldn’t help but imagine the raging feelings swirling inside Kushida right now.

“If you’re satisfied with my explanation, then would you all be so kind as to return to your seats?”

Horikita is implying that there’s no point in paying so much attention in the length of her hair.

Horikita, who had a strong impact on her surroundings, seemed to be a little dissatisfied that she is attracting so much attention. She looked grumpy, but fortunately the bell rang, and the chat finally ended.

# 1

Several days have passed since the opening ceremony was held. In the blink of an eye, the weekend has passed, and it is now Monday.



Every single day since then was full of peace.

At the beginning of the school year, major changes have been made to the blackboards, and all textbooks are now replaced with tablets. Last week, my eyes have been focusing on the newly distributed tablets. Just as e-books have become more popular these days, the textbooks that were used in class have also been replaced by electronic versions inside the tablet itself.

The tablet is given to each student, along with a new high-speed charging device installed at the rear end of the classroom. The charging port is always available to prevent the tablets from running out of battery in the middle of class. In principle, it is prohibited to bring back the tablets, but students can transfer necessary data over the school's network.

The previously troublesome number of textbooks that we had to carry each day has now all been stored inside this 12-inch tablet as data. In addition to being able to freely manipulate and utilize tools and images, the school has also responded to the act of globalization by allowing smooth interactions with people from around the globe in English classes.

If you think about this government-supervised school, this new way of learning is quite late to being introduced.

However, it remains unclear at this time whether the progress made is necessarily correct or not.

The evaluation of this change will be greatly divided on whether the children are able to succeed in the future and fit in with society.

The level of knowledge gained during the second year of high school will naturally be higher than that of the first year. I don't know how high the threshold for other high schools are, but I can at least say that this school seems to be way above average.

If so, then how far can Sudou and Ike go on their own when studying? In order to prevent more expulsions, we as a class need to support each other more than ever before.

At any rate, what has changed substantially is the digitization of study

materials, but other than that the seating plan of the class has also changed. It is possible to use private points to secure your favorite seats, but in the end, I didn't need to use that.

Previously, I sat at the rear end of the class and right next to the window, pretty much what you'd call a cliché seat. After the change, I miraculously scored another seat at the back, this time however being at the opposite end of the class, where I'm closest to the corridor.

Generally, seats close to the corridors are unpopular because there are a lot of people coming and going which can cause distractions. To me, however, that wasn't that big of a deal.

In addition to that, although the number of new students passing each other has increased, there is no change to me who is not involved in club activities, and I have yet talked to anyone else from another school year yet.

It's already been a year since I've talked to a senior student. That time was to get a hold of old exam questions.

At any rate, the first few days of the new school year were lull.

"Is everyone present?"

At about the same time as the school bell rang, our homeroom teacher, Chabashira-sensei shows up in our classroom.

Chabashira-sensei's expression was serious.

And since there won't be any classes in the first and second periods after this, we can expect something to go down.

It seems that the minute amount of peaceful days is coming to an end.

"Sensei, is there a special exam?"

Before our homeroom teacher even spoke, Ike immediately asked that question after noticing Chabashira-sensei's facial expression.

Nobody dared to act silly, and the feeling of even trying has gone straight out the window.

It did not seem to be a problem for Chabashira-sensei, though.

In the past, every time a special exam is announced, many – if not, all – the students would feel uneasy.

However, as much as we despise them, it is a path that cannot be

avoided if we're aiming for the top. Though, we are becoming more and more capable of facing them.

"It may be a concern for all of you, but there are things that I have to address before I move on. This is very important for the future of your school lives."

After taking out her cell phone, Chabashira-sensei continued to explain while showing the screen of her phone to us.

"Everyone, take out your cell phones and put it on the desk. If anyone has forgotten to bring their cell phone, then I'll have you return to your dorms and take it back here. However, everyone seems to have their phones, so there's no need for that."

Mobile phones are now a must-have item in daily life. Above all, it can always be said that we have now been accustomed to having it on our bodies, as if we're wearing them just like our clothes.

Soon after confirming that all 39 of our cell phones are on our desks, Chabashira-sensei began to talk again.

"First of all, each student has to access the school's website in order to install a new application. It should be available for download at this time. The official name of the app is 'Overall Ability,' but after installation, it will only appear as 'OAA.'"

The screen of the 'blackboard' switches to a live-action demonstration of the installation of the app.

This can be considered as a convenient part obtained from digitalization.

After installing the app, an app with the icon of the school's insignia is added in our phones, along with the letters 'OAA' displayed below the icon.

"Once you're done, put your phones back down. If there's anything that you don't understand, then raise your hand."

These instructions are so simple that there shouldn't be anyone who has trouble following them. That's at least true for our class, as there are no students who are struggling with the instructions, so the process is going smoothly.

“Remember, it’s not only you, class 2-D, but all classes spread among every school year are doing the installation work at the same time. This app is an excellent one which will bring various benefits to the students of this school in the future. I’m going to ask you to start up the app without wasting any time.”

Following Chabashira-sensei’s words, I tapped the icon of the app to start it. Immediately upon opening, the camera on the phone is activated.

“Scan your student ID cards using your phone’s camera. It’ll automatically complete the initial setup phase.”

Using the rear camera of my phone, I took a picture of my own student ID card which included information such as my name, age, class, student ID and a photo of my face. After a few seconds, the setup is complete.

“Now that you’ve created your accounts, there’s no need to log in later. Also, be careful with handling your phones from now on, because the app you just installed on your phones have confidential information about yourself.”

When I logged in, I could see several interactable items listed as small icons in the main menu of the app.

“This app contains personal data for all students of all grades. For example, if you press the icon for class 2-D, all students’ names will be displayed in alphabetical order. Give it a try.”

A total of 39 face portraits are certainly displayed in order.

“I don’t care who you look at, but I recommend tapping on your own name first.”

I tapped on my own name as I was told.

What I thought was going to be displayed is just simple information like my name, face portrait, age, class, date of birth and so on, but it seems I was off the mark here.

What was displayed were pieces of information that nobody would’ve imagined.

<b>2-D Kiyotaka Ayanokouji</b>	
First-year Results	
Academic Ability	C (51)
Physical Ability	C+ (60)
Critical Thinking	D+ (37)
Social Contribution	C+ (60)
Overall Strength	C (51)

“Sensei, what are these? Are they my abilities scored in numerical values like a game?”

“That’s right. These are your individual results based on your performance during your first year here at this school. Although I said it has confidential information, it is still possible to view not only our class’ but also the grades of all students no matter what year they are in. I approved of this statistics system since I judged it to be useful for your education in the future.”

In other words, the role of this app called OAA is to get a grip on everyone’s capabilities in numerical form. They can also use the app for convenient purposes such as sending a notification to all students in this school.

In the upper right corner of the screen, I tapped on the ‘?’ button. A menu popped up which includes a detailed explanation of each scored category.

Academic Ability: Calculated from scores in written tests conducted mainly throughout the year.

Physical Ability: Calculated from the evaluation of the individual’s strength in P.E. classes, club activities, special examinations etc.

Critical Thinking: Calculated from how capable the individual can adapt to society, such as the number of friends they have, communication skills which include their standing position, and whether their applications for solutions are effective.

Social Contribution: Calculated from various factors such as the attitude of the individual during class, absences and tardiness, their

behavior, and their contribution to the school through the affiliation of the student council.

Overall Strength: Calculated from the four aspects of the individual as listed above, though their social contribution score is halved when calculating their overall strength.

Here is a more specific way to find the score for overall strength:

(Academic Ability + Physical Ability + Critical Thinking + Social Contribution \*  $\frac{1}{2}$ ) all divided by 350, and then multiplied again by 100 which is rounded off to the closest integer.

I see now. My ability to think is lower than other aspects, which in my opinion should be a convincing enough cover to hide my true abilities.

The number of friends and communication skills for me are not very high.

If other aspects are evaluated by what we usually show, then it is likely that the student body can easily agree on their scores.

In addition to the first-year scores, there are options for second-year and third-year scores, but those are currently blank (since we haven't even finished our second year at high school yet).

"Right now, only your first-year results are available, but from today onwards, if you are in your second year of high school, you are going to be evaluated without the impact of your previous year. Updates will be made at the beginning of each month along with the class points.

"Sudou, your current academic ability is grade E, right? That's not a very shiny grade that you can show to anyone, but if you get a perfect score in the next written exam, you will be given an A+ on your second-year evaluation page," Chabashira-sensei explained.

In other words, the evaluation for your second year is for that year only, separate from your previous year. And the annual results will always remain as its own record. Even if Sudou gets a perfect score in the written exam in April and his academic ability evaluation shoots up to an A+, if he scores 0 points on the written exam after that one,



then the two results will balance out and he'll get an average evaluation of C. If that's how you spent the year, then the total average of your actions will come out at the end.

The most notable aspect of this app is that information about the student body can be confirmed not only through face-to-face exchanges but also through OAA. Just from seeing a student's name, face, and what kind of grades they have, no matter if they were a freshman, sophomore or senior, you can gather up lots of information without even the need of directly exchanging information.

By the way, the first-years seem to have their grades evaluated based on their performance in their third year in middle school. Aside from academic ability, physical ability and social contribution, there is a possibility that their critical thinking ability cannot be evaluated yet.

A useful performance checking tool... No, that's not the only thing. This will play a more important role.

"Some students who have achieved unsatisfactory grades may be dissatisfied with the fact that records remain, but I have to tell you that I'm the one who oversaw all of your growth that year."

The closer your academic ability and physical ability are to E-grade, the more you will leave a stain as a student.

"The results in your first year of high school are now a thing of the past. It will have no effect on the future evaluation of all of you who have now become sophomores. In other words, it is important for those who have achieved poor results to change their perceptions on their past. We expect the visualization of your performances to encourage that kind of growth."

If personal results continue to remain in the app which can be reviewed by everyone in the future, there will be a lot of people who would want to try to improve their reputation, even if it's small. As Chabashira-sensei said, the effect of promoting improvement in the performance of each student seems to come to an extent.

"Sensei, why is the evaluation method for social contribution a little

different from the other three categories?”

The impact of social contribution on overall strength is halved.

The question was posed by Yousuke Hirata who had wondered about that point for a long time now.

“Academic ability, physical ability, and critical thinking; the school regards these three categories as very important for the success of a student. On the other hand, social contribution is a little different. Social contribution is based on a student’s morals and manners, their language and attitude towards teachers, their presence in class and absences or being late to school. Their ability to comply with the rules and regulations set by the school, and the appearance of the student from various aspects such as their ability to speak up and their accuracy in replies are all examined. Since being socially active is merely a choice and not impacted much by talent, the impact on overall strength is set to be low.”

Unlike the three other skills that cannot be gained overnight, a person’s personality and attitude can change a lot in just one day.

Take Hirata’s case for example, one day he’s a social, friendly person who is easy to talk to, and the next day he’s become a walking ghost that rejects anyone else’s company. Plus, when he recovered from that ‘depression’ era of his, it only took him one day to do so.

From that, we can see that social contribution isn’t a challenging skill that requires a lot of effort to acquire, and instead it can be heavily affected from one’s surroundings.

“This app is equal. It has nothing to do with the fact that the class is above or below. Everyone is equally valued. As of now, students who are highly regarded for their collective strength can say that they have achieved results worthy of praise as a single person.”

The student list is arranged alphabetically, though it seems to have a sorting function.

It is not necessary to look one by one for the person with the highest collective strength in class D in these two years.

When I tapped on the sort function, it was Yousuke Hirata who

came up at the top with the highest combined strength in the class.

<b>2-D Yousuke Hirata</b>	
First-year Results	
Academic Ability	B+ (76)
Physical Ability	B+ (79)
Critical Thinking	B (75)
Social Contribution	A (85)
Overall Strength	B+ (78)

If you look at it from a numerical standpoint, you can see Yousuke's excellence in a single glance. No matter which part you put your attention to, his high level of achievement is almost indescribable. If Yousuke's weakness, which he had shown at the end of the year, had not been shown, his evaluation would have been a little higher.

On the other hand, when I sorted the Overall Strength category to 'Lowest to Highest,' Ike came out on top. His overall strength was 37.

Additionally, there was another student with the same overall strength.

Airi Sakura.

She also had an overall strength of 37.

Sudou, who seemed to be regarded with the lowest-ranked overall strength by the class, is placed above several students.

<b>2-D Ken Sudou</b>	
First-year Results	
Academic Ability	E+ (20)
Physical Ability	A+ (96)
Critical Thinking	D+ (40)
Social Contribution	E+ (19)
Overall Strength	C (47)

Academic ability and social contribution are quite low in terms of

year one due to his poor behavior. However, the height of his physical ability is enough to compensate for his evaluation, and thus he escaped from the bottom. When I did further research, I found out that Sudou is the only person with an A+ rating for his physical ability out of the whole first/second grade.

Sudou, who has started improving his academic ability and is showing his mental growth, will most likely improve his exam grades even further in his second year.

“Also, this is not directly related to the class-D, but in the first/second grade, as an exceptional measure, only the physical ability evaluation of the second-year class-A student Arisu Sakayanagi is the same as the lowest-grade student.”

Arisu Sakayanagi, a second-year class-A student, has a physical handicap.

She needs to use a cane for your everyday usual activity of walking.

In other words, since she has a sort of handicap on her physical movements, she won't be able to do any exercise, sports or rigorous activities.

However, it's not fair to just give someone zero points if they are not able to do something due to their condition – which, by the way, can't be controlled in the first place – so, in that sense, there has been an agreement to match her physical ability score with the person who has the lowest one as well.

At any rate, the visualization of one's abilities might be essential in reflecting one's prowess.

“This app will make you aware of your own performance and change your bad habits, so that you can play an important role for the class. But... I don't think that's all there is to it. This is a personal speculation, but I think that a year from now, students whose overall strength are lower than a certain level will be given some kind of 'penalty.'

“Penalty?! No way, will it be dropping out...?”

“There's a possibility, but like I said, it's only my speculation. It

won't necessarily apply. However, it's better to think that the closer your overall strength is to grade E, the higher the risk of dropping out."

Ike and Airi, who are at the bottom of the list now, have been evaluated close to grade E according to their overall strength.

If you continue to spend this year like how you did in the last, then it won't produce a pretty result.

"Some of you may be dissatisfied with the difference between your own self-assessment and the school's evaluation. However, this is the current 'evaluation of yourself on the school's side.' If you are dissatisfied with that point, show that you have a higher evaluation than the one given by the school. Convince them that you're not as low as they think you are."

"But how can I do that, sensei?"

Ike, who has the lowest overall strength, rose his hand in a hurry.

"For students who are doing club activities, your physical ability can be increased. For those who are not, I suggest you joining a club to boost your confidence. Participation is better than not participating at all."

In more situations, students who appeal to the school will basically receive preferential treatment. That said, on a case-by-case basis, it is likely to become a problem if the appealing process goes poorly.

"It's like an individual battle."

Chabashira-sensei did not miss Horikita's remark, who muttered so.

The introduction of the app will most likely increase each student's abilities to some extent. This will greatly increase the odds of winning in the battle that – not just class-D, but every class in every school year – has been fighting so far.

It's not just Horikita who had such an impression.

"It's both a mistake and a correct solution. The new school system, which will be introduced this year, has been officialized by the school, which was conceived by the student council president, Miyabi Nagumo."

Nagumo's dream of creating a system where everyone's abilities

can be evaluated has been officialized. That first step probably took a lot of time an effort before the introduction of this app. The president had been making small movements ever since last year.

“But as ever, what is required as a class remains in the core concept. Just remember to work on that point every day.”

After installing and explaining the app, the first hour of class ended. As it was break time, each student began to stare at the screens of their phones. In addition to my own evaluation, the grades of my classmates and students in other classes are something that I would like to see.

“I don’t like the fact that my common sense is lower than Kouenji’s!”

Sudou, who was staring so hard at his phone as if he was affixed onto it, shouted so and glared at Kouenji.

I went to check Kouenji’s evaluation after closing my ear to block Sudou’s loud shouting, and so it seems what Sudou had been ranting about turns out to be true.

<b>2-D Rokusuke Kouenji</b>	
First-year Results	
Academic Ability	B (71)
Physical Ability	B+ (78)
Critical Thinking	D (24)
Social Contribution	C (25)
Overall Strength	C (53)

Kouenji, who demonstrates his unusual behavior and abilities in class and exams, is highly regarded for his academic and physical ability.

“So? I don’t really care all that much. Your physical ability is higher after all.”

Kouenji spills his retort without a hint of envy despite his physical ability evaluation being lower than Sudou’s, which should be higher.

“That’s because Kouenji isn’t serious about it. I don’t want to admit



it.”

As Sudou said, Kouenji’s physical abilities are indeed very high. It seems to have the same potential as Sudou, but there is a big unevenness because it depends on the mood in P.E class and their participation in club activities. If you aren’t interested in those, then you’ll skip it, and sometimes you could even throw the towel on it.

It is not uncommon to procrastinate or just be a lazy person as a whole and not move your body in the first place. Sudou, on the other hand, is always serious about any issues and is producing top-class results. Is it natural to have a big gap in their evaluations even if they have similar physical abilities?

It was the social contribution part that Sudou lacks.

In other words, it’s about manners and morals.

He is a problem child who does not take things seriously, compared to Sudou who is putting in effort to change his ways.

Even though it’s only a slight difference, he doesn’t seem to like being below.

I don’t know what Sudou wants to appeal about, though.

The reason why Kouenji has a higher evaluation than Sudou is because Kouenji didn’t cause as much trouble as Sudou did. Even if he *did*, most of the time Kouenji’s actions are well hidden, compared to Sudou who usually expresses his rage in a very outwardly manner.

It’s true after all, Kouenji’s personality is different from Sudou’s; one is arrogant yet calm, and the other is sporty but wild. Due to that, Sudou keeps getting penalized for his rude actions, which led his score to be under Kouenji’s by a slight bit.

Kouenji was quiet as he listened to Sudou’s rant, but he never dealt with it any further than that.

He didn’t even try to touch the OAA, which everyone is crazy about now.

After more than a year worth of school life, Kouenji may be the person who has changed the least.

At any rate, the students will be able to visualize their grades over

the next year.

This action on the school's side is both a merit and a disadvantage for us.

For example, because there is an item called overall strength, a certain and strong ability ranking was made for a while.

If an inconvenient special exam happens now, it won't be necessary to answer who's going to name the candidate for the penalty (a.k.a. dropping out). They'll all focus fire on the students with the lowest overall strength.

I don't think I'm worried about Ike nor Airi for right now, which have both been placed at the bottom of the rankings. Only time will tell their stories.

## 2

The second hour of class began with the topic of the introduction of OAA not getting any further.

And perhaps, this time the full-fledged 'story' will be spread.

The thoughts in the student's minds came true.

"I will now explain the outline of the special examination"

As if to start the class normally, Chabashira-sensei broke the story out like that.

"The first special exam you'll have in your sophomore year, it's an unprecedented trial that will be adopted. It's the introduction of an app."

Was it the influence of Tsukishiro? The school system seems to be changing drastically.

"It's important to note that it's a written exam where the first-years and second-years will be partnered up together."

"First-year students and... Partner.....?"

Until now, it has hardly been possible for us to interact with other school years.

There are exceptions such as training camps, but it was natural because of the mechanism of each school years fighting against other

classes in the same grade.

Is that the wall that was removed by the introduction of OAA?

“In this special exam, written exam and communication skills will be greatly tested.”

Studying and communication skills.

Items that do not seem to intersect at first glance.

“I don't have to explain the importance of written exams, but classes have not been able to interact with other grades aside from sports festivals and training camps. Therefore, I judged that the communication skills of the students were lacking.”

“But we're competing with the same grade, aren't we? Did you misinterpret the details of the special exam?”

Ike showed a little dissatisfaction with the involvement of the first-year students.

“It's not that I don't understand, but it's about thinking objectively. It is not possible that a new graduate who becomes a member of society will only interact with other new graduates. Some of them are in their second year, and some will fight in the same world as veterans who are 20 or 30 years old. Sometimes an older opponent will be a rival.”

“It's... Well, I can somehow imagine it.”

“As the world shifts to meritocracy, many Japanese companies continue to be bound by seniority and lifetime employment. It would be strange to not interact with your kouhai, it's also not strange to interact with your senpai. Those who felt that way when they heard of this special exam should change their perception once more. A single example to help comprehend this is skipping grades. It is a system that is taken for granted in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and so on. It is not uncommon for small children to study in conjunction with high school and college students. Can you imagine and accept a situation where there are elementary school students who are learning the same way as us in this classroom?”

My Classmates were encouraged by Chabashira-sensei to use their

imagination. And I'm sure they couldn't understand it. It must have felt impossible or strange.

Certainly, there are few cases where the skip class system is used in Japan. There are certain conditions, but many people do not know that it is possible to jump. The fact is that this system does not fit at present in Japan where learning is side-by-side and does not necessarily accept the system of jumping classes itself. The white room had no side-by-side learning, so I can understand this point well.

However, it is certain that what Chabashira-sensei says is not everything.

Everything shouldn't be imitated from foreign countries.

Nothing is just to follow other countries. In Japan, education that matches the culture of Japan is also important. Chabashira-sensei probably knows this herself but has to follow instructions from above to explain it this way.

"In the future, there will be cases where you will be competing against first and third graders. But this time, it's about working together remember that."

Is this why this is a special exam that requires both written and communication skills? Students who could not understand what the teacher is saying tilts their heads.

"To make people understand, it's best to remind you of last year's special exam. It's easy to understand if you think of it as an improved paper shuffle which was a exam to find a partner among your classmates."

Paper shuffle.

That is, classmates are paired and partnered up together to challenge the examination.

The point is that this time it is not a classmate who we'll be teaming up with but instead the first-years.

It feels like that's the only difference, but this is very different from the last time.

"This time it is your personal freedom to work with anyone in any

class of the other year. The exam period is at the end of the month, in about two weeks including today. There is time for you lot to carefully select partners and to work on our studies.”

For this special exam, one can agree that the installation of the OAA app may prove to be beneficial for this examination.

It’s natural that the first years would not know the details of their senpai's in the upper grades.

It is also natural that the second years would not know the details of the first-years.

The paper shuffle between classmates that was done before was done within our class, so I was able to coordinate things and partner up with someone in our class.

In other words, it was easy for someone to support the students who could not study and survive in their own classes. However, this exam is different. It runs on the premise of finding excellent partners. Moreover, our partners is not in the same grade therefore we will have a weak relationship. First years are in the first years, and second years are in the second years.

Above all, it takes a reasonable amount of time to build a relationship of trust from people we barely know.

If we wanted to build a relationship like this without the OAA app, two weeks would not be enough at all.

However, with the OAA app, the names and faces of students can be recognized, so some shortcuts are possible.

Moreover, since it is easy to roughly grasp the present academic ability of the first-years, it can be used as a reference when deciding our partners.

“On the appointed day of the exam, the exam will consist of 5 subjects. The score for each subject is out of 100 points and the total score is 500 points. And a crucial rule is... this time, there will be two ways to win, one for each class and one for each individual.”

Chabashira-sensei with her fingers on the blackboard displayed the special examination outcome.

### Class Wins or Loses by Grade

Compete with the average score derived from the scores of all the classes and the scores of all partners.

From the order of the highest average score, classes will get 50 points, 30 points, 10 points, and 0 points.

### Individual Wins or Losses

Scored with points combined with your partner.

The top five pairs will receive 100,000 private points each as a special reward.

10,000 private points will be paid to the top 30% of the pairs.

If the total score is 500 points or less, the second-grade student will drop out, and the first-grade student will not be transferred individual points for three months, regardless of the class points held by the first year.

In addition, students who are judged to have manipulated or lowered their scores, such as intentionally making a mistake in the problem, will be expelled regardless of grade. If a third party forces a student to lower their score, the same shall be dropped from school.

“I'm sure you'll understand somehow. This exam will be good for students with a high reputation for academic ability.”

If the OAA app didn't exist, it wouldn't be possible to even see details of the first-graders, but the ability of the student was completely naked by the introduction of this app. The lower the academic achievement assessment by a student, the harder it is to find a partner.

Students who are worried about their academic ability will see a tendency to remain unsold.

Smart students naturally work together with smart partners to aim for high-ranking results. Students who are concerned about their academic ability will also seek smart partners to survive. If students of lower academic ability who overflowed to the end of this exam will be forced to work together, 500 points would be impossible for them to reach. If that happens, the harsh reality of dropping out of school awaits for the second grader.

The second graders understand how the structure of the school works, and in the class, friendships are growing.

If you ignore the top rewards, you will be able to move to help your classmates.

However, if it is the first-grade student, the unity of their classes will not be formed yet. In that case, students who are not great friends will not consider the fact that not being able to get points for three months is a big thing and they will just ignore this exam. Just like a year ago, when a lot of people in this class tried to get rid of Sudou.

“Partners are approved by each other and completed by registering within the OAA app. It's possible to work together from this very moment today, but once you've found your partner and agreed to it, you can't break the pair for any reason after that.”

It will be quite difficult to make an immediate decision unless the other person's academic ability is very high.

A cheap and fast decision may cause students to regret it later.

The app will update to display information about your partner.

How to decide on a partner and rules

You can apply only once a day to the desired student using OAA (if they do not accept it, the application will be reset at 24 o'clock).

If the other party accepts the application, the partner will be confirmed, and it will not be possible to cancel it thereafter.

This is excluding unavoidable troubles such as withdrawal or major illnesses.

Both partners will not be able to accept new applications at 8 a.m. the next morning, when the information will be updated on the OAA at the same time.

It does not specify who the partner is.

Because of this rule, it is not possible to send a large number of application emails as appropriate, even if you send it to a specific person, it is possible that the application will be wasted because it will be at 8 o'clock the next day that it is known that the person has partnered with another student on the same day.

Well, I don't think there will be any students who will receive applications from students they don't know well.

Perhaps this rule is a measure to make it difficult to know who was working with who. The reason is that the analysis of the strength of each class can be easily done if it is reflected from the partnerships made.

“Sensei! There's no kouhai who would want to work with me! I don't think an idiot like me can do anything to improve my communication skills!”

Such lamentation by Ike was reasonable.

The probability that low-academic students will be needed is low until there are not enough students to want to assemble.

It's just a matter of a straightforward approach.

“Don't worry. No matter how many remain, it will not become a situation that a pair cannot be assembled. If you can't pair up until the day of the special exam, your partner will be randomly selected at 8 a.m. on the day.”

This relief measure let the feelings of Ike get comforted.

“But we can't treat students who couldn't find a partner in the same line as the other students. Therefore, the pairs created by the time running out will adopt a mechanism of getting a 5% score penalty from their overall score.”

For a moment there was relief, then the class went on an uproar about the 5% score penalty.

It's not a situation where students would not be able to take the special exam, but it's still a pretty painful handicap to burden.

“Sensei, we had three dropouts last year. Won't there eventually be three first-year students left over?”

To such a trivial question by Yosuke, Chabashira-sensei answered indifferently.

“For the remaining three, they are compensated by doubling the student's points. However, there will also be a penalty of 5% as well, so few people will be willing to work alone.”



It's simply one person with a two-person role. It seems that there will be no problems if three first-year students with high academic ability remain unpicked. However, in this special exam, I cannot just worry about Ike and Sudou.

For me, it's going to be a very difficult special exam.

The reason for the high difficulty is that if the total score is 500 points or less, you will drop out. In other words, it's essential the partner we get during this special exam must score at least one point. Even if I get a perfect score in five subjects, if my partner scores 0, I can't avoid dropping out.

Normally, this is a very sharp rule and dangerous. First-year students don't have the risk of dropping out, so if they get out of hand and get a low score, we'll be forced to drop out unreasonably. However, there is a rule made by the school to observe this.

“Students who are judged to have manipulated or lowered their scores, such as intentionally making a mistake in the problem, will drop out regardless of grade. If a third party forces a lower score as well, the person will be expelled as well.” This can be said to be extremely important because this special examination is approved as justifiable.

Measures to prevent fraud, such as threatening to cut corners and demanding private points. When this happens, the test will not be able to get out of hand. This ensures that the general class is strongly following the rules.

But rules that are normally well-followed are not enough to ensure my safety.

Why? -- because of the white room student sent by Tsukishiro.

Because the other side is set up to assume that you will drop out, but this rule is not deterrent.

If he succeeds in pairing with me, he'll definitely score zero points without giving mercy.

In other words, if I accidentally choose the White Room student as my partner, then I will drop out. At the beginning of the special exam,

there is a chance that I will be expelled from school by a probability of 1/160.

Originally, if a partner is expelled due to fraud, the pair's students will not be penalized and will be treated as a pass. But as far as this explanation gets, the teacher never said anything about that.

The reason no one pursues this point is due to the self-assured belief that there should not be a student who will take action to ensure another student to drop out. No, that's not all.

In the unlikely event that such a student appears, the school will probably deal with it in a hurry.

It would be quite severe to be expelled due to the involvement of a student who cheated. However, if it's the white room student, my partner will have to take serious actions to drop me out.

It would be my mistake to pair up with a student who will not take the exam seriously.

A small number of holes are provided in the rules so that students can respond flexibly.

It's Tsukishiro who flickers in my mind. It's definitely the rules that he thought and built up.

I can't miss any opportunities for this special exam. If I take a long time in choosing a partner, the possibility of being with the person from the White Room will increase.

It would be nice if I could act quickly and work with students who I don't think are the White Room students, but my academic ability evaluation by OAA is C. I'm not in a position to choose as many partners as I want.

Even if I try to choose a student with extremely low academic ability, the first grader will not be able to wipe off their anxieties in me because I only have an academic ability of C, and will not be given much choices to choose partners.

In this case, it is likely that I will safely find a partner with academic ability C, but in anticipation of that, it is possible that the white room student also has a evaluation of academic ability C.

At the stage of the explanation of the rules, it is certain that the hurdle is higher than any other test so far.

“Sensei. How difficult is the exam?”

Horikita raises her hand and listens to Chabashira-sensei’s giving out important points for other students.

“Without covering it up, there are a lot of very difficult problems. It's definitely the most difficult exam my classmates have ever taken. But... that’s the case when aiming for a high score... Even students whose academic ability is near E can get more than 150 points without preparation. If you study for a few days, 200 points will be safe. And this is just a guide, but---”

Saying that, Chabashira-sensei displays the prediction score table by academic ability.

Academic ability E: 150 points to 200 points

Academic ability D: 200 points to 250 points

Academic ability C: 250 points to 300 points

Academic ability B: Around 350 points

Academic ability A: Around 400 points

“If you prepare properly, you'll get around this score. But don't forget that if you neglect your studies with pride, you may naturally get a score of less than this.”

Chabashira-sensei adds that we should not over-trust the contents reflected on the monitor.

“And if you look at the part you lot the with academic ability A will get only around 400 points, I’m sure in this exam, students who will not get a perfect score or exceed 90 points in any subjects.”

It seems to be the hardest written exam we will be taking so far.

At any rate, if students in the vicinity of academic ability E become paired together, it is simply a risk of expulsion.

“This is an overview of the special exam to be held in April. Try to brace your spirits and challenge this exam together.”

After that, the verbal explanation of the scope of the test is done.

Chabashira-sensei says that if you carefully study the topics learned

in first grade, you will seemingly be well prepared.

### 3

During break time, many students inevitably began to gather around Yousuke.

Immediately after that, Horikita also stood up and joined them.

I decided to listen in too.

“Damn, what should I do Hirata!? Because my academic evaluation is an E, I’m in a big pinch!”

Ike asks Yousuke for help while holding his head.

Yousuke looked over the whole class as he asked Ike to settle down.

“Let’s calm down first, then solidify our policy.”

Yes, there’s no need to panic.

“but--!”

“It’s certainly not an easy exam. In order to get at least 501 points, students with academic ability E must pair up with first-year students with academic ability B or higher. It will be much safer if you work with these students.”

To calm down his classmates, he explains a way to pass the special exam easily.

“And we’ve been working together on similar exams for a year. It’s not like you guys can’t get more than 250 or 300 points if we work together and work on our preparations as before we will be able to pass this exam easily.”

“Yes. Horikita-san is right. If we work together, we should all be able to finish the exam safely.”

The words of Yousuke and Horikita were in accordance and overlapped, and the movement of the surrounding students began to calm down.

“The important thing is to not lightly decide on your own partners. The only time you can make a quick decision is if you tell me that your partner will have academic ability B or higher will join you.”

It is certainly impertinent to find a partner soonest, but we will not be able to change our partners until the end of the exam.

We need to make sure with our partners we can definitely score 501 points or more.

“After that, if you have more than a B+ academic ability, don't rush to decide on your partner. It may be important to leave a certain number of students who can study to save everyone. At any rate, regardless of who can't study, be sure to consult with me or Hirata-kun when there are any developments.”

Horikita tells only the minimum and hopes that they do not panic and make a fuss carelessly. Honor students such as Keisei and Mii-chan also showed their attitude to cooperate without hesitation. It's not like we're going to be able to negotiate for the whole class together, but it's going to be difficult to get a partner out smoothly. We must fight against time because we compete in the face of rivals.

“For the time being, I'm going to negotiate with the new students that will enter into the football club. I'm sure some of the students will be able to study, and they might be able to become partners with some of you.”

Yousuke, who was listening to the story, also called out to Horikita. Human-wave tactics are also an important strategy.

“I'm will be glad if you can ask, I'm glad to have your help.”

Moreover, it is a part that Horikita cannot do because she's not in a club. Yousuke smiles gently and nods.

“And I think students with academic abilities lower than C should be our priority. “It's the right decision. Let's work together to find a partner.”

At the very first stage, just being able to explain the policy to the whole class will be able to get everyone's cooperation. Students can help the weaker students and get a sense of security that no one can abandon you

“Horikita-san, and another one--”

“Some students with academic ability C or higher are not good at

interaction. I'm also going to help the people who will struggle to create partners despite their academic abilities."

Even without a detailed discussion, the two people with quick thinking were able to understand.

Perfectly breathed in with the minimal amount of conversation required.

"Thank you. It would be helpful if you would do that."

Horikita and Yousuke will continue to talk without hesitation and will sort out the situation in a way that both parties are satisfied with.

The two of them once clashed head-on, but they can work together incredibly well.

The reason is because of Yousuke's flexible way of thinking more than Horikita's roundedness.

"By the way, what about Sudou-kun and the basketball club? First graders are coming in, aren't they?"

Horikita asks Sudou who is passionate about club activities.

However, Sudou diverted his gaze as if he was hiding something.

"Oh, erm. But..."

"But?"

"It's been a few days since the club activities started, but it's quite spartan, I'm sure... It's because I'm doing it."

"Do you mean that you're intimidating the new students?"

"Well, it's something like that. I just want them to play basketball seriously."

The point is that he may have already become a person that's disliked by many first-years.

Of course, it's because he's serious about basketball.

Seniors who are strict in practice are likely to have a big split in their likes and dislikes between students.

"It's okay. For the time being, concentrate on your studies and don't think about the special exam."

"Oh, yeah."

Because it was counterproductive to swing at a peer, Horikita bit

her nail firmly.

## 4

After lunch break, I was called to Horikita and went to the hallway.

“It's not something we talk about in the classroom, and if someone comes here, we'll know.”

“So? It's about the next special exam, isn't it?”

“Yes. Chabashira-sensei said that the next special examination will be a test with a considerable degree of difficulty. It's a challenge for students with low academic ability, but it's an ideal development for me and you to compete.”

First, whether we were going to finish our argument, I broached it.

I and Horikita have made only one promise during spring break. To compete in one subject in the written exam, with the higher score. If I win, Horikita will join the student council, and if Horikita wins, I'll generously use the ability I've been hiding for a year for the class. It has been declared that it is difficult for students with an A evaluation to get more than 90 points per subject. If it is such a high difficulty level, it will not be a development of a poor draw between perfect scores.

“You don't have any complaints, do you?”

She was asking for my decision to confirm our bet for this exam.

“Of course.”

Because it will not be beneficial if this is dragged out any longer, I accepted it as a matter of course.

“That's good. Then we'll be able to move on to the next discussion right away.”

For the time being, I was satisfied with the reconfirmation of the promise and took out my cell phone.

And launch the OAA that just installed this morning.

“In the first year, I checked the number of students with academic ability B or higher as honor students. There were 17 people in Class

A, 13 in Class B, 13 in Class C, and 11 in Class D.”

54 people in total. It can be said that it is a reasonable percentage.

“There are only four people in our class who fall into the E category. There are 12 students in total, including students with academic ability D. First-year students have complete strength and are fully competitive.”

“The question is how many of the honor students can be drawn into our D class.”

Even if it is said that there are 54 people, a scramble is inevitable. If there’s an opportunity, everyone will surely take it.

“Yes. Of course, the class that has secured a lot of these 54 people has the upper hand, and on the other hand, a class with a lot of D+ and below students are simply disadvantaged.”

The app introduced now combines extremely useful features.

The class that masters these features will be the closest to winning.

“Sakayanagi-san, Ryuen-kun, and Ichinose-san. Each class should start moving from today.”

Among the leaders, Sakayanagi, who is in Class A, will attack immediately.

All you must do is to take advantage of the class with the least number of students anxious about their academic ability, and work hard to bring smart first-year students to your classmates. Even if you’re the junior, you can see the stability of the class A students as soon as you look at the OAA app. If they cooperated with them, they will be able to get higher rewards.

On the other hand, we don’t.

“First of all, I’m going to give priority to helping the students with academic ability E and D.”

Horikita agreed and nodded lightly.

“It’s hard to say 100 points yet, but I’ve made a partner priority list. After all, I think it’s best to sort them out first.”

“Wait a minute. It’s true that Sudou’s academic ability is an E-judgment, but what about right now?”



Sudou's grades at the beginning of his entrance were so bad that he was evaluated as E as a result.

However, in the second half of the first year, his academic ability began to improve little by little.

In a word, it is not strange if it is increased a little now.

“Well, I guess... It's certainly much better than before. Even during spring break, Sudou-kun was working hard to catch up.”

“Have you been doing study sessions all the time?”

“No way. I'm not free enough to go out with him every day. To some extent, I've learned the ability to learn alone. I was just monitoring his deliverables that came up once every few days.”

“Hey...”

I thought it was Horikita's effort, but that's something to be honestly impressed with.

“To be honest, Sudou-kun is a little higher rank than me... Compared to other students, it's a feeling of him coming from D to D+.”

Of course, it's just over-optimistic calculations.

However, from a person that knows Sudou's attitude from a year ago, it is a huge growth.

“I'm sure that before when Sudou heard the contents of the special exams, he would panic and would be in confusion. Now he was very calm.”

That said, Sudou was noisy just now about the fact that Kouenji's social contribution score is higher than his.

“Even though it's more than academic ability D, he is still a higher priority than Ike.”

“His personality and appearance are a big influence. And he was caught up in the high-pressure attitude in club activities he was talking about this morning.”

It seems that Sudou's evaluation isn't good, after analyzing it properly.

“As a freshman who knows nothing - Sudou-kun or Ike-kun, who

will be easier to partner up with?" On the surface, it's the same result."

"Well, it's likely to be Ike after all."

Sudou, who has large height and red hair and a harsh tone, has a scary impression.

If you want to work with someone at the same level, I would like to work with Ike who is still easy to communicate with.

"It may be more difficult to find a partner than to have a poor academic ability."

That's why I've designated him as a student I want to assign a partner to first.

"I understand. If I could, I'd like to partner with a first-year student with academic ability B or higher."

"Yes. I think I'll be able to get through it. I want to move quickly; can you help me?"

"Cooperate? I don't think there's anything I can do."

"You can just say what you think to me, and it's good to have someone you trust keep it close."

"I mean, do you trust me?" -Ayanokouji asked.

"I trust all my free-going classmates." Horikita said.

She gave an expression which I couldn't tell if she was lying or not.

"Or do you feel uneasy that you haven't studied in a while to beat me." Horikita provoked.

The provocation she gave was rather counterproductive.

It's like she gave me a chance to prepare an escape to let me study in my room because [I'm worried']

"I'm very anxious--."

When I was grateful to use the escape, our phones vibrated.

The reason is that the second year Class B leader, Ichinose Honami, messaged the chat provided in the app. And the content is--

"From 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. on the day of the event, I got permission to hold an exchange meeting between first- and second-year students in the gymnasium. Students who have time should come together."

Students who is worried about how to get in touch with the first-

years, find this as a helping hand.

“As expected of Ichinose-san. It’s not just about thinking for her own class. It’s about thinking of the whole thing and acting on it.”

It’s not clear how many participants there will be, but it’s a good idea that there will be a reasonable amount of people that will attend.

It is also highly conceivable that a partnership will be established on the spot.

However, far from being pleased, I could see a little impatience in Horikita’s expression.

Maybe she was imagining a similar strategy.

“What’s the matter? The special exam has just begun.” I asked her.

“Yes, that’s right. First of all, we should decide on what we should do first.”

That would mean participating in this exchange party after school.

And before I knew it, I was also forced to participate.

Well, it’s not that much if you just follow...

As if she knew what I was thinking, Horikita turned her eyes to me and said that.

“Okay, I’ll go with you.

“Oh, are you sure you’re going to give me a hand? I thought I have been avoided recently, but...Recently, you’ve become a very supportive person.”

It’s true to call me out for ignoring her, for a girl that was aware she was being avoided.

“I was just going to see what kind of fight you were going to do.”

“I see. It was too early to assume you were going to cooperate.”

Horikita was more than satisfied with that. But it’s a test that I’m forced to survive this time. It’s sometimes easier to act with Horikita.

“Then I’ll be going back. It’s a big task to raise Sudou-kun’s and Ike-kun’s exam scores above the passing threshold, since this exam is based around more intelligent students. Of course, there is also Ryuen-kun and Sakayanagi-san... In other words, we have to be careful about our strategy.”

She's saying it as a matter of course, but I've never felt that way in Horikita before.

She would've focused only on Sudou and show neglect towards the enemy's strategy.

This time, however, she gave off a strong sense of vigilance from the start of the battle.

"Of course, at this stage, I don't know the details of what those two are plotting, but I think the usage of 'private points' will hold the key to victory."

"Money". Horikita thought that the power of private points will come in very useful in this special exam. There have been no interactions between the first-years and the second-years so far. In other words, using private points will be the quickest way to finish the story.

"I don't know how much points there are in class A or class C, but if we were to compete for students, this strategy involving money will surely be used."

"That's right. Private points are the easiest things for first-year students to understand."

Everyone can imagine the flow of getting points and responding with their studies. However, our private points will be depleted in no time if we don't strike at the right time and person. Especially since class D has been sluggish in their accumulation of private points recently, it is clear that amount of private points – that is, the amount of money – is significantly inferior to other classes.

"Normally, we should also put in some points to secure a certain number of students."

Basically, the only way to fight with money is through money itself – just like fighting fire with fire. It is essential to play this game of cash to see who is more loaded.

However, the fact that I was feeling impatience with the whole chat that Ichinose sent a while ago still remains.

"First of all, I guess I'll be lurking around the shadows at the

exchange party. If I see a chance, then I could act on the spot, but I'm not going to rush it. I wonder if that's alright."

"Ayanokouji-kun, do you think it's okay for you to find a partner on your own?"

"Let me ask you back. If you were a first-year student looking for a partner, would you choose to partner up with me?"

"Even if you judge it objectively, your academic ability is C. There shouldn't be any problems with anyone. It's just a matter of putting your differences aside, isn't it?"

"Then, I'll ask for your help when I'm in trouble."

First-year students who decide to work with Horikita and Yousuke can be excluded from the possibility of them being a White Room student. In a sense, it is not possible to use the technique of just asking to be one's partner, and then splitting to find another partner instead.

But, if all the information is leaked to the other party, then I'm certain that I'll be contemplating on that choice. Since the research is solely a background check, it will be difficult to avoid that White Room student 100% of the time. I won't be glad if I were forced to make a change of partner from the judgement of Horikita and Yousuke, and I won't easily admit I can see through the White Room student above all.

"You're better off not being the one to make the first move. It's not that there is no material to be concerned about, but the 5% penalty this time doesn't come cheap."

That's right.

I'm not going to make the first move, but I'm still worried about the student from the White Room. It will be problematic if I run into that student.

## THE PROBLEMATIC GROUP OF FIRST-YEARS

Dozens of first and second-year students gathered in the gymnasium. Most of them are first-year students rather than second-years. After all, there are many students who see this exchange meeting as an important opportunity to form a group. I'm not familiar with the names and faces of the first-year students, so first, I'll look at the second-year students who are participating.

I can't see the leader of class A, Sakayanagi. I don't know if it could be called a substitute, but I could see the figure of Masayoshi Hashimoto could. Sakayanagi's legs are bad, her range of action is narrow and slow. But she has great leadership skills to make up for it. As far as I can see, Hashimoto is the only one from Class A. There is no indication that he is trying to talk to anyone.

Who will encounter whom at the exchange meeting, and the spy is the kind of person who guesses, so only time will tell?

About half of the Second-year Class B boys and girls including Ichinose are present. There was also the figure of Kanzaki who supported Ichinose by the side. However, there is no impression that they are biased toward other special abilities or students who are likely to be anxious about academic ability. It seemed that they simply chose social students. On the other hand, at first glance, there is no sign that class C students are participating. It is as if there were no exchange meetings in their eyes from the beginning. Even if you take

this place alone, you can see the whole second-year's thoughts. Today, however, it is not the second graders that is important to Horikita.

But rather the first-year students, who are practically all strangers. First-year students who have just entered the school shouldn't know much about the second-years.

Under such circumstances, many students may not be able to keep up with their thoughts because they are suddenly paired with a second grader. It is also a group of good students who are participating while shrinking.

Looking at the situation, Ichinose tried to expand her circle from self-introduction to casual chatting without mentioning anything about the special examination. Of course, no one can be immediately open to it.

Ichinose, who understands this, proceeds slowly, without rushing and gently smiles. And, it melts the heart of the students. Just a few minutes ago, I was looking at this exchange party and the scene ahead seemed to come to my mind.

"She didn't give priority to special exams, but instead to build trusting relationships with each other first. It's a very Ichinose-san way to do things. It's a dazzling way that not just anyone can do." Horikita gave her first impression of this gathering.

It is unknown to what extent this strategy can be used, but it is very important. What Ichinose is doing will benefit both first and second years.

Horikita describes Ichinose as trying to show such a success.

From that profile, the strategies that Horikita thought of was slowly disappearing.

"Are you thinking of a similar strategy?"

"..... That's right. The strategy I thought of was centered on the private points which is heavy on our class. Therefore, I thought that it was important to build a relationship of trust with the first-graders. But I'm not very good at it like Ichinose-san. Or rather, that kind of strategy is her strong point."

You need something to get recognized as a partner. The “something” can be related to points, trust, friendship and favors.

“Most of the first-year students have already known the name and face of Ichinose Honami in the second-year Class B. Students who are anxious will surely come to her and she will meet their expectations.”

“Yes.”

They will not even bother to come to the second-year Class D.

“But even if you can’t use a dazzling way like her, there’s a way to do it.”

It seems that Horikita got some hints at this exchange gathering.

The key is probably in the part where she was observing the stats of the first-grade students through the OAA app.

There is no sign of returning yet, and Horikita continues to observe the first-year students.

I’m not the only one who was watching the scene by her side. A large shadow moves next to her.

“It’s just that those guys are weak.”

Next to Horikita, Sudou, who was watching the first years, voiced such an impression.

Sudou offered to accompany Horikita because the request to hold the exchange meeting of Ichinose was admitted, and it was decided that it was urgent to use the gymnasium until 5 o’clock though it was planned to be a club activity straight on the other hand today.

He seemed to have been told that it was unnecessary, but he came to the gymnasium anyway.

“Don’t glare at them unnecessarily. There’s nothing you can gain by scaring them.”

“I’m not glaring at anyone. It’s just how my face has been from birth. Well, it’s okay to take your time. Isn’t it possible to take a few smart students from Ichinose? “Don’t be impatient.”

Sudou said that it is better to join the discussion and Horikita told him not to be impatient. Even if a student other than class B in the second-year talks to a first-year student at an exchange gathering,



Ichinose will not get angry. Rather, I can see her being happy.

“What will you do?”

I was also concerned about Horikita's behavior, so I asked her about it.

“Do you think we can compete in this place with second-year Class B in terms of sociability and win?”

Ichinose places more importance on the relief of the first-year students than on the victory of her class.

Class B seemed to be trying to deepen friendship with first-year students without leaving anyone out.

It will lead to a relation of trust with the first-years.

“I don't think we can do it.”

I don't know if Yosuke or Kushida could do it, but, I, Horikita, and Sudou lack the ability.

We came to this place while knowing that.

Horikita starts to act when the discussion began.

“Let's go.”

It's not about participating in the social gathering; it's about gathering information as well.

Horikita had no intention of taking the first-grade students to make allies at this exchange gathering from the beginning.

“Is that fine, Horikita?”

“More than half of the students are not at this social gathering. I will negotiate with them.”

In other words, the aim is to target first-year students who didn't listen not attend the gathering.

However, it will be difficult at the same time.

Students who could get a partner with their own abilities and didn't need a helping hand, or those who don't have the courage to attend an exchange gathering, or students who have already developed a strategy. In any case, there are a lot of students who have thought of multiple strategies.

“Let's hear the reasons.”

“There are two reasons. As far as I researched, the percentage of students who came to the exchange party had a high percentage of people who were more concerned about their academic ability. What we are looking for immediately is students with at least B or greater academic ability. In other words, an immediate fighting power with confidence that they can fight without coming to an exchange party.”

I see. Certainly, it makes sense they would stay away from this exchange gathering.

“Our top priority is not to work together with students with Academic ability A. Our goal talk to students who have the ability to follow-up with the low ability students to ensure that there are absolutely no dropouts.”

However, even if the second-year class B recruits a lot of people, the first-year students will naturally overflow. Moreover, Ichinose would most likely give priority to saving low-skilled students than students with high academic ability in her position. Though there is a possibility to pick up students with a high degree of academic ability.

Was there any reason, or is there another hidden motive?

“And there was a specific bias about the academic ability of the first-years who showed up at the exchange gathering”

“Bias?”

“The first year Class D students didn't participate at all.”

“Not participating at all. Well, it might be an interesting bias indeed.”

“You seem to understand.”

“What the hell? What do you mean that the 1st year class D didn't participate?”

Not understanding the meaning, Sudou tilted his head.

“There are 40 people in one class. Some of them are bad at studies, while others are not good at communicating. However, there were no participants from the first year class D. It's clearly a reflection of the

intention of the class.”

It's clear that someone is controlling the class and leading them to non-participation.

It is quite an extraordinary thing, given that they haven't been in school for many days.

“In other words, there's already a leader in the first-year class D, and he rejected the exchange party...”

“If you can negotiate on a class by class basis, you don't have to bargain individually.”

In other words, a strategy to cover students in the second-year class D and the first-year class D

“It's a good plan, but then, won't we lose?”

It's not a bad idea to avoid dropping out, but it's going to be impossible to beat another class on the overall scores.

“That's right. In that sense, I'm not going to play a class fight this time.”

“I'm not in a position to ask this, but is this fine?” I asked.

“Yes. No problem at all.”

Horikita says that clearly. The direction of her strategy is the same as Ichinose though the way of fighting is different. The idea of throwing away the chance to get a lot of class points with the opportunity of a valuable special examination.

Hashimoto of Class A had already left the gymnasium. I wondered if the reconnaissance of the exchange gathering by Ichinose had been completed.

Horikita heads to the exit of the gymnasium to follow Hashimoto like that. We also follow her.

But just before I left, I looked back at Ichinose once. Ichinose is talking to first-year students with a smile without noticing our presence. Whether or not students with academic ability of E or D, Ichinose will give a helping hand to them without hesitation.

A battle to give up the victory of the special exam and avoid expulsion from their class. The way is different but it's the same as

what Horikita is trying to do now. But is it really the same in terms of essence?

“Yo”

When we left the gym, Hashimoto called out as if he was waiting for us.

“Ichinose is the same as usual”

“She seems to be thinking best about saving her classmates and first-year students.”

“That's it. Ichinose is not a problem at the moment. Do you know the disadvantages of attracting those idiots? It's like throwing away the game.”

Hashimoto talks as if he was disgusted by Ichinose. He must not have noticed that Horikita's strategy is the same. He didn't think that Horikita had the idea of throwing away the game.

“If you knew, you shouldn't have attended this in the first place, right?”

“Oh, I see. That's true, too.”

“You Class A guys... Sakayanagi-san knew without even looking at the exchange party. The reason she didn't participate was because she had already anticipated what kind of students would show up in this place.”

Well, that's right. Nevertheless, only Hashimoto was sent for reconnaissance.

“So how are you going to bring honor students to your side?”

“It depends on the princess's idea; I just follow the instructions.”

Hashimoto walked away, saying he was satisfied with a light conversation.

“Whatever that Hashimoto bastard is saying I don't trust him, Suzune.”

“It goes without saying. Or rather, are you familiar with Hashimoto-kun?”

“No, not at all.”

He answers in a dignified manner

“..... Right. Well, Class A has a big advantage for being Class A. To some extent, people will come together naturally.”

If you enter this school, you will sooner or later realize that class A is the best. Even if you don't know the fact now, you will soon come to realize it.

“Let's hurry. At this time, only the students in class D should be left in the school.”

Horikita goes to the first-year classroom. To explore the state of the first-year Class D.

She decided that now was a good opportunity, while the eyes of other classes were on the exchange gathering.

## 1

We went to the first-years floor that we had used daily until last month. Considering the students who went to the gym, there are not many students left.

From Class A to Class C, we'll look at the situation without calling out, but the students who have found the senior students will turn their heads to look. You can't suddenly come to the first-year floor and expect to be welcomed.

Few students didn't care, and most students hate uninvited guests.

It will be the same after tomorrow. Some students will call out to first graders in the morning or noon to find a partner as soon as possible, but this is a dangerous bet that can be counterproductive.

However, there are still students who are chatting in the first-year classrooms as we peep.

Do they feel that there is no need to panic about this special test, or do you still not find this special exam a big deal?

“After all, the remaining students seem to have a lot of people who have enough ability to pass the exam.”

“It's okay. Let's hurry up!”

For first-years, only three months of private point suspension if the

score is less than 500 points. Of course, it must be a big loss, but the first transfer of points after the entrance ceremony may have made the sense of danger thin.

“Kuku. You’re rather slow”

After inspecting the first-year Class C, Horikita heard voices and moved towards the source.

There was a figure of second-year Class C Ryuen fearlessly standing there.

The first-year class D is right ahead, and it seems he was coming from that direction.

“Ryuen-kun, are you also looking for the first-year students that didn’t attend the exchange party?” Since you didn’t show up at the exchange gathering.”

“The only people who gathered in the gym were idiots, right? Not even worth seeing.”

It was the same as Horikita’s strategy, Ryuen also came to look for students who had not attended the exchange gathering.

From the way he is talking, is he also aiming for the top students of the first-year?

The difference in time between our and Ryuen’s arrival is only about 20 or 30 minutes.

If he had that much time, he could have already succeeded in getting several students.

It will be 8:00 a.m. the next day for us to see each student’s partner that has been decided.

“Don’t worry. I haven’t made a move yet.”

The two people here will not believe the word easily.

Until the app is updated it won’t be known whether second-year Class C has decided on their partners.

“I don’t believe you, that’s what’s written on their faces.”

“At least I’m going to believe half of what you’re saying here is true.

“I see You’ve become very wary of me.”

“Oh, I’ve never been wary of you, before is that right?

“Kukuku, that's right.”

As if not liking Ryuuken's provocations towards Horikita, Sudou glares at him.

A normal human would have been afraid just by seeing his sharp gaze, but it will not work on Ryuuken.

“So, you chose a brainless guy as a bodyguard.”

“What the hell?”

Horikita lightly controls Sudou, who is about to lose his temper.

“Oh, you need a brain to be a bodyguard? I didn't know you had one.”

While holding his hand, Horikita retorts without diverting her gaze from Ryuuken.

“Are you going to threaten the first-years? That attitude of yours is counterproductive.”

The sight of Ryuuken striding down the corridor arrogantly will naturally scare the first-year students.

“If I threaten them lightly, I think they'll cooperate with me immediately.”

Horikita stared at him, but Ryuuken didn't seem to be joking around.

“..... You're kidding me. You think that way will work?”

“Agree or disagree. I wonder if there will be a problem with me threatening them a little. During the explanation of the rules, I've learnt that compelling a low score will be penalized but I didn't hear anything about threatening partners for cooperation.”

“You don't have to say it in the rules. If it's a problem, it's you who's going to have to deal with it.”

“Then, make it a problem first and show it to me. Well, I'm not going to be stupid enough to be fooled.”

It is a bullish statement as usual.

Declaring that threatening is possible enough, it just should not be revealed to the school.

Regardless of whether this is true or false, Ryuuken must have

recognized that Horikita always went down the road.

“Well, then you have to do what you like. But if the evidence comes out, I'll raise the complaint without forgiveness.”

It might not have worked on Ryuuken though it might be advice for deterrence.

“So? Are you trying to pull someone in?”

No need to answer. Horikita closes her mouth.

“You got something by spying on the exchange party, didn't you?”  
So, did you come in a hurry to check the rest?”

“Maybe it's the same as you?”

“Kukuku, maybe so.”

Ryuuken continues to talk to Horikita just to make it interesting.

“Then I'll tell you what's good for you since we have the same idea. This year, even though they've just entered the school, the first-years settled down quickly. In other words, it's more likely that the people on the school side are talking about the school's mechanics to some extent with the new students.”

If it's true, it's unexpected information. At the stage of April, we knew nothing and were playing as much as we wanted. Of course, the other A and B classes were calm, but that was probably because of the difference in background.

What Ryuuken is saying here is not only about a specific class, but about the whole school year.

I wonder if it's a good place to partner with second-years from the start.

Or is there another point why the school explained to them earlier.

“Isn't it just that this year's freshmen were just better, and we were just particularly dull?”

“Some of them are trying to put together a class at this point. Even though it's quite early.”

Even if they started acting from the day the special exam was announced, there is no way that someone has already been able to put the class together.



Ryuuen says that this will not happen unless they act soon after enrollment.

“What are you aiming to achieve by telling me this?”

“Nothing. You can't take the measure to kill your opponent in this special exam. But in order to win overall, I think we will need to do various things.”

With this special exam is not easy to expel students from other classes. The difficulty is relatively high because of the concealment and name of who the partner is. It's hard to figure out who you've partnered with on the app unless you're listening to it or collecting information. Even if you can assign a student with low academic ability to a rival class and identify it, it is almost impossible to cut corners from it.

I guess. If you get a low than is expected of your academic ability, you will be considered intentional, and even if you are a first-year student, you will be expelled. In the end, only the ability of the first grader and the student in the class will influence the victory or defeat. What you can do with a strategy is to draw as many high-academic first graders into their classes as possible. It's not easy for Class C, which seems to be low in overall strength, to take first place.

There is no chance of winning even if you compete with Class A with power of private points, and the basic academic ability of the class is different. No matter how much money is put into the first grade and pulled in the first-years, a severe result awaits. In that case, it is necessary to throw away the first place in the overall place and aim at the reward which is given to the top 30% in individual scores.

Of course, Horikita does not touch that point. If Class A and C don't compete in general, we'll be in trouble. Rather than making it easier for Class A to take first place, I hope they will be able to do it in a large scale and wear then out, even by a little.

“You guys better do your best and work hard.”

“You can say what you want. It's none of your business.”

“Kukuku, that's bad.”

After that, Ryuen left the floor of first-years immediately.

It's too short of a time to get anything done.

"The first-graders may be feeling a lot more resistance to us than we thought."

If you recognize that in this school, you must fight with others to the bitter end, it is a natural course of action.

"If that's the case, shouldn't we negotiate as soon as possible?"

"Well, I guess... of course you should. but..."

Horikita stares towards the end of the corridor.

You can see the classroom of the first-year Class D there.

"Let's go quickly."

"I wonder if it will be that easy?"

It seems that Horikita also noticed it during the discussion from the time Ryuen appeared from first-year Class D until he left.

During that time, no one has seen anyone coming out of the classroom.

Even if I got close, I couldn't hear a single sound.

When I arrived, I opened the door of first-year Class D, and I was convinced.

"What's going on?"

In a hurry, Sudou looks over the classroom from front to end.

"It might be a lot harder than I thought, to negotiate with the first-year Class D."

There is not a soul inside the classroom. It is completely empty.

The 40 students, who did not show up at the exchange gathering, seemed to have disappeared suddenly.

"It might be a more troublesome class than you think."

However, it is not possible to worry about it forever.

This is because it is necessary to act before the other classes begins to move in earnest.

The game starts tomorrow. From the point of contact with the first-year class D, the battle of Horikita begins.

When I returned to my room, I memorized the names and faces of all first-years through the OAA app.

Horikita has her fight, and I have my fight.

On the day that the special exam began, a total of 22 partners were decided.

## 2

It was the end of the lunch break of the next day that the situation began to develop rapidly.

It happened when everyone had finished their meal and was waiting for the afternoon class in their classrooms.

“Oh, there are some first-years here!”

It was my classmate Miyamoto that shouted so.

The special examination is only possible with the cooperation of the first and second year students. I don't think it's usually surprising, but apparently, it's not.

“It takes a lot of courage for them to come to the seniors' floor.”

Hirata Yosuke, who was in the classroom, said that while I thought that.

“If we want to go to the third-grade floor, we certainly will need a lot of courage.”

“Certainly...”

It's a different story if there are many seniors with close relationships, but that's not the case for the first-years.

There must be a lot of students who will feel like they're getting into enemy territory.

In such a situation, it might be a surprising event that a few first-years were willing to come to the second-year classes.

Yosuke decided to see them, and I followed him.

Horikita and Sudou followed shortly afterwards.

The first thing that caught my eyes was a large man.

There were several reasons he stood out. Is he as tall as Sudou?

But more than that, it was very impressive to see him walking majestically in the middle of the second-year floor.

The opposite phenomenon is that the second-year who passed by them escaped to the edges after seeing them. A female student walked a little bit behind the tall male student.

Realizing that it wasn't an action they would take to seek partners, Horikita comes out in front of the male student to stand by. Sudou also followed her.

When I met the two first-year students, the first thing that they saw for some reason was me.

Shortly after that, his gaze departed and moved to Horikita.

I recalled the data that I learned from OAA yesterday.

It seems that Horikita will encounter that class at an unexpected timing.

“What's her name?” The man asked.

“Wait a minute. .... I'll check.”

The girl, who had been operating her cell phone for a short time, soon showed the screen to the man.

“Second-year Class D. Horikita Suzune. Academic ability A.”

The girl was speaking in a polite tone unlike the man, so it felt like a strange combination.

After that, he turns his eyes to Sudou who stood beside Horikita.

And in the same way, the girl repeatedly used her cell phone and showed it to the man.

“Ken Sudou. .... Huh”

After seeing Sudou's data, the man snorted at him.

“My name is Nanase Tsubasa, a first-year Class D student. He is also of the same class.

“Hosen Kazuomi”

They each gave their names. I thought for a while and remembered their names, the large man is Hosen Kazuomi, and the girl is Tsubasa Nanase.

Both are true first-year class D students, as they have said

themselves.

A student in class D who we were not able to meet yesterday. It must have been a surprise that they suddenly appeared, but Horikita is both lucky and unlucky. In this situation, where there are other classes, it is impossible to start negotiations with the first-year Class D blatantly.

“For a freshman, you've done a lot of bold things. I'll buy that courage off you.”

“Ah? Buy What?”



The large man enters in between and Sudou interrupts Hosen Kazuomi who was rushing Horikita.

Although he is about the same height as Sudou, but because of his large physique, Sudou looked a little smaller compared to him.

“Academic ability E+ huh, looks like a stupid fool.”

“What the hell!?”

“Well, It's just about right. I'm sure there's only class D in here anyway. It's convenient.”

What does that mean?

“You class D guys are a bunch of fallouts. If we don't nominate our class D, you can't even form a decent pair. So, I'll lend a hand to you incompetent fools. You know what's left, right?”

Hosen Kazuomi asks this as if it was a test.

“In other words, do you want to partner up with us?”

“Oh? Isn't the position different? You're asking me to join you?”

It is similar and different, Hosen rushes to Horikita.

“Well then let's get together quickly then, lower your head.”

While suppressing Sudou, who is getting irritated, Horikita strengthens her words without regard to the physique difference.

“You seem to be mistaken about something. We're both on an equal footing.”

“On equal footing?” Don't let it get to you.”

“You're the same class D, nothing different from us.”

“You don't understand. If I'm interested in something, I'll do as I want, right? You don't want to disrespect me, do you? Then you should know you are in as the position to ask.”

Apparently, the student named Hosen is already aware of the special weapon that only the first-year students have.

“What are you saying?”

Perhaps Horikita knows, but I dared to ask him back to bring it out in words.

“You know that, don't you?” There's a way to forcibly lower your

score here.”

When Horikita heard his words, she bit her lips a little stronger.

“Ha? It's been a year since you second-years came here. If we intentionally lower our scores you're going to drop out!”

“Don't show your bad habits, Sudou-kun, don't get provoked.”

“But...”

“I understand the feeling of wanting to be angry, but this isn't the time for it.”

But what Hosen is saying is not a lie.

“It's certainly a rule to drop out if you fail the test. But the penalty for not finding a partner until the time runs out is another. So only you second-years are in trouble, right?”

Random partner confirmation if time runs out.

As a result, you'll receive a deduction of 5% from the overall score.

Second-year students who are likely to drop out are more likely to suffer more damage from penalties.

“Oh, that's the way it is!”

Unbelievable, Sudou showed Horikita a look to ask for confirmation.

The only answer to that question is yes.

“You guys will also suffer. Are you going to lose your money just after you enter the school?”

If you get the penalty, your chances of scoring 501 points or more will naturally decrease.

“Compared to you second-years, it's not going to hurt me very much. Hey, what's up?”

Hosen checks with Nanase standing behind him.

“Yes. It is said that private points will not be transferred for three months, but at most 240,000 points. I don't think it's going to be a fatal problem.”

“Do you understand the situation, Horikita-senpai?”

Hosen says that as if he was the senior instead of Horikita.

Sudou who was watching it, may have been unable to endure more



than this.

He stood in front of Horikita in a way that strengthened his intimidation, without holding a fist on his hand.

“What?”

Hosen said so to Sudou without hesitation.

“Don't act so cocky.” Sudou said.

“Don't lose your cool, Sudou-kun. You know this school well, don't you?”

First-year students might not know, but the corridor is naturally under the school's surveillance.

The surveillance camera is always working, and if there is a problem, they will be able to dig up the video.

“I know...”

Sudou was repeatedly reminded, and Sudou withdrew, despite being slightly irritated.

It's certainly a problem to get excited at once, but it's enough just to hear Horikita's words.

At the point where Horikita took her eyes off Sudou back to Hosen, the big hand of Hosen in front of her pushes Sudou's chest.

“Wa-”

At that moment, Sudou, who had lost his balance, put his hand on the floor to break his fall.

“Is it only your height that's big? I just touched you lightly, didn't I?”

I couldn't hide my surprise even after watching the reckless action of Hosen.

It is because it is a bold action to be taken as an act of violence now.

If you know the difficulty and risks of violence in this school, no one would do it.

This year's first graders seem to be more familiar with the school's situation than usual.

If what Ryuen said yesterday was true, I have to say that this is

reckless.

Do they really understand school rules?

No, it doesn't look like that. If so.....

“No---!”

Sudou, who was about to regain his composure, understood what he had done, and almost burst into anger that had accumulated.

However, a man who was watching this from a distance jumped in.

“What are you doing!”

It was a second-year Class C student Ishizaki Daichi. He is in the bad category of students, but he has a good heart. Seeing how Sudou, a student of the same grade, was treated, he seems to have lost patience.

“He sprang up like a cockroach.”

The girl who called herself Nanase stops his kick lightly against Hosen, who laughs mockingly.

“Didn't you come here for discussion?” If you come here to use violence, Then I'm going home.”

“Is it violence?” I just touched him with the same strength as patting. I'm sorry Sudou.”

He spat out, as if to mock the second-year student.

“Don't be stupid, too. Oi!”

Ishizaki stretches his arms with the intention of grasping his chest.

The moment he saw the extended arm, the corner of the mouth of Hosen slightly rose.

“If you don't want to die, don't do it, Ishizaki.”

The arm which extended from Ishizaki is stopped on the verge of grasping the chest hold of Hosen.

It was Ryuen who seemed to be watching from the corridor.

“Why are you stopping me!”

Ishizaki showed confusion at the actions of the Ryuen, who had restrained him.

What surprised me was that Ibuki, from Ryuen's class was also there.

“Why was he stopping Ishizaki.?” I murmured.

This kind of trouble is basically a welcome to Ryuuken, he’s not the type that hates it.

Whether there is a surveillance camera or not, he would push ahead without hesitation.

That's probably why he was so surprised to stop the fight.

Ryuuken lowers Ishizaki and approaches Hosen himself.

“You’re my opponent this time? Sudou there seems to be weaker than an idiot.”

Hosen, who saw Ryuuken whose physique was not large at all, gave his evaluation...

“I know you very well. You’re the little celebrity in the local area I used to live. I didn't think he looked so stupid.”

Ryuuken responded to Hosen, which repeatedly referred to Sudou as a fool, with the same words. It seems that the area is indeed like Ryuuken. Ryuuken is usually an enemy of other classes, but it is encouraging for him to help with this kind of trouble. In fact, Sudou also succeeded in enduring his anger because the atmosphere of the place changed.

“And, what is it that you know, Ryuuken?”

“Ryuuken?”

The expression of Hosen, who heard the name, changed, and he laughed with his big mouth wide open.

“Hey, what the hell. It’s a rainy day. I’ve heard enough of your rumors to dislike you”

“It looks like you have the intelligence to remember people's names.”

Apparently, they have known each other for a long time. The first-year Class D Hosen seems to be a person that was somewhat close to Ryuuken.

However, it seems to be good, even if it was rival relationship. Apparently, Ryuuken was with Ishizaki and Ibuki. At one time, he had withdrawn from the front lines, but then he started leading class C

again.

“But to think that the rumored Ryuuken had such a poor body. It's surprising.” Hosen provoked Ryuuken.

“You seem to be able to use your muscles up to your brain as far as I can imagine” Ryuuken provoked Hosen back.

“I was going to kill you when I went on a few expeditions, but the only thing I couldn't see was you because you got scared and went into hiding, right? Did you just abandon your soldiers like that and run away?”

“Kukuku, you've been saved by this meeting. If you had met me elsewhere, you wouldn't have had such a big attitude by now. Luckily, I'm a caring person.”

“I thought you were going to run away with my tail wrapped around you. If you don't want to, can we fight right here right now?”

Hosen holds a big fist fist and gives some room.

If he knew Ryuuken in junior high school, there was probably no big difference between the impression that we second-graders have of him. Don't you think of it as someone you don't want to turn to the enemy?

“Don't stop me. I'm going to beat this gorilla.”

Despite being provoked, Ryuuken declines the offer.

Of course, he won't fight in such a place.

Ishizaki and his colleagues probably thought that they would show their stance to take it even if they changed places.

“Are you that bad? Your physique is even bigger than Sudou here.”

“Let's go.”

Ryuuken laughs a little before leaving as if he had no interest in Hosen.

“Are you okay with leaving it like this?”

Ibuki also knows that not jumping people was not like Ryuuken. She asked involuntarily.

“Ha. It's better to leave it be for now. There's plenty of time.”

Ryuuken just replied quietly to Ibuki.

It would be good if it ends with this, and Hosen started walking behind Ryuuken.

“Is that girl your soldier, too?”

Hosen, who was watching Ibuki, asks Ryuuken.

“Yes, why?”

“Huh? Who? Don't make me your own soldier.”

“Ryuuken, who even uses girls as soldiers.”

“Your one to talk. Who's that cute and pretty girl over there?”

In a similar way, Hosen also has a student named Nanase on the side.

“She's not my soldier. Well, it doesn't matter. Let's play Ryuuken”

No matter how many times he is provoked, he won't ride it.

As if to symbolize it, he turned his back and showed his will to retreat.

“That's right. If that's the case, then...”

I felt that Ryuuken was making a smart choice to not get provoked, but Hosen extended his arm. The arm was directed at the Ibuki. Ibuki tried to ignore it.

But...

The arm extended more quickly and powerful from before, and grabs Ibuki's neck straight up.

“Eh!?”

Ibuki tries to pull off the arm in a hurry, as if a dangerous signal was sent from the brain waves.

However, Hosen's arm did not budge, as if it was made of steel.

Ryuuken looked back and captures the figure of Ibuki getting choked by Hosen.

Ibuki tries to escape by using her hands and feet skillfully, but Hosen did not let go.

“Huh. Get out of here. Or you can call the people over there by the defective class for help.”

Absolute self-confidence, rather than fear, is visible on his face.

But it's certainly not a situation where you can easily get away from.

The school naturally will act if there was commotion caused at this place. In a situation where the brake seems to be applied inevitably, only the unbound Ryuen moved while being amazed. He moved to help Ibuki rather than to give a blow to Hosen. The dive slips into the bosom of Hosen. However, while holding Ibuki's neck, Hosen makes a light kick towards Ryuen in a restricted motion situation.

“No~!”

There, Ishizaki, who was once stopped, also participates in the fight.

It was beginning to become a commotion which could no longer be suppressed.

“It's okay. Even if they fight it wouldn't involve us.”

A full-fledged fight may break out.

In such a situation, Nanase, who was watching since the beginning to end, opens her mouth.

“Please stop Hosen-kun.”

Hosen, who was showing confidence did not feel like he was being handicapped while holding onto Ibuki against Ryuen and Ishizaki, but he was interrupted by his classmate Nanase and stopped moving.

“Did you say something?” Hosen asked Nanase.

Rather than listening to her advice, he shows irritation about what she said.

“The senpais have been concerned about the surveillance cameras from a while ago. Judging from that situation, I decided that there is no benefit in going wild here.”

“I know, let me do what I want I'm just playing with them a little.”

He said that he was aware from the beginning that there were surveillance cameras that restricted his behavior.

If that's the case, then the series of actions Hosen took is still a bit puzzling.

Then, ignoring the advice from Nanase, he tried to resume the fight.

Nanase further strengthened her words.

“If you know, it's even more so. If you're going to waste any more time here. I can also make ‘that’ known here.”

The movement of Hosen stops again by receiving the abstract word of ‘that’ from Nanase.

After showing a bored face, he let go of his hand, which was holding Ibuki, and it caused her to fall to the floor coughing.

“You better not do this again, and if you don’t meet my expectations, I won’t forgive you, even if you are a woman”

“If that happens, I will accept it.”

Even though she was threatened by Hosen, Nanase said that with full confidence without showing signs of fear.

The situation seemed to have calmed down as if nothing had happened.

Anyway, this man named Hosen is definitely not a man we can cooperate with easily. There are only a few students in the second grade who are proud of their ability to fight. Among them is Ryuuen, Sudou, and Albert. However, even though Hosen is a freshman, he is quite talented in fighting. Even if I faced him, he wouldn't be an easy opponent to keep in control of. I can't read what would happen if I tried my best to make him feel that way and get away with it in one piece. The purpose of Ryuuen's attempt to stop Ishizaki from being careless was probably because he decided that doing a simple strike was disadvantageous. A problematic first-year has appeared.

“Let’s not do anything else. The purpose has been fulfilled, so let's head back Nanase.

“Yes. That's wise.” Ryuuen provoked Hosen.

Hosen looks back at Ryuuen again, wondering if he was satisfied with the small fight.

“If you want, do you want to pair up, Ryuuen?”

“Unfortunately, I only work with humans. I’m not going to work with a wild gorilla.”

“That’s a shame.”

However, this did not end here.

In addition to Hosen and Nanase, a first-year student was watching the situation for a long time.

While walking back, Hosen's sight finally turned towards the first-grader.

"You didn't see anything. Got it?"

"Don't get too close to me. Yes, I understand."

The boy of the first-year answered like so while receiving it refreshingly to Hosen, who was glaring at him.

"It's fine if you want to chat, but it's not a good idea for Hosen-kun to make a fuss here anymore. First, I think that it is necessary for you to return to your class. No?"

An adult finally showed up here and asked.

"What is Hosen doing?"

A man in a suit appears as if to spare the commotion caused by Hosen.

At the same time, many of the second-year students who were watching from a distance ran into their classrooms.

"Hosen, I know how you feel about the exam, but the rules of the school are rules that must be obeyed.

"I know that."

"If you know that, get out of here. Fighting is not something that can be tolerated by this school."

"It's not even a fight."

Laughing with his nose, Hosen put his hands in his pockets and turned his back to us while walking back.

Surprisingly, Hosen withdrew, while telling Nanase to retreat.

"Then, I'll come again, Horikita." Hosen said while heading back.

He went out of his way to visit the second-grader's classes and caused a commotion.

"I apologize for the fuss."

At the end, Nanase bowed her head, everything returned to normal and Nanase, who raised her face, looked at my eyes again when she left. Her eyes looked at me when they came over to our class. An



exploring eye that seems to want to know something.

However, as soon as she caught my gaze, she diverted her eyes and chased after Hosen.

“I’m sorry, you guys. The students in my class caused trouble.”

The teacher apologizes to Horikita, who was watching over the situation by his side.

“No...”

“By the way, let’s introduce ourselves lightly. I am Shiba Katsunori, I will be taking on the D class in the first year. I’ve just arrived at this school, but I’ll ask for your best regards.”

He gave a light self-introduction, and Shiba-sensei returned to follow Hosen.

Then, the boy who showed composure, bowed to the second-grade students after they left.

“My classmate, Hosen-kun, seems to have troubled my seniors. I apologize on behalf of our school year again.”

He was different from the previous one, and it seems he is a student capable of communicating.

“We first-year students don’t understand the special exam very well yet. We apologize for the inconvenience we caused.

After both the apology and the words that served as a respect towards us, the student who called himself Yagami lifted up his head after bowing.

At that time, Yagami suddenly notices something.

It’s just a few Class D girls who seem to just have returned from lunch.

There were four people, Matsushita, Kushida, Sato and Mii-chan.

One of them, Kushida, looked at the commotion that happened and looked surprised.

“It’s kind of noisy. What’s going on Horikita-san?”

While recognizing the existence of Yagami, Kushida tries to learn more about the situation mysteriously.

“It’s not something you should concern yourself with.”

“Is that right?”

When she tells her that it's nothing, she tries to go back to the classroom with the three of them.

“Um... are you by chance Kushida-senpai?”

“What?”

Yagami recalls receiving such a voice. To know the name of Kushida, I wonder if Yagami was also an acquaintance of Kushida? That was what I thought.

“Eh?”

The other party looked at him and didn't seem to recall this mysterious male.

“It's me. Don't you remember Kushida-senpai? But it's not unreasonable if you forgot. I'm Yagami Takuya.”

Kushida listened to his name and pondered for a bit, then she seemed to remember him right away.

“Yagami... Oh, my God! Eh, that Yagami-kun!?”

“Yes, it is Yagami. It's been a long time!”

“Yagami-kun was in this school too. It's a great coincidence!”

“I never thought I'd see Kushida-senpai again here.”

“Do you know each other?”

When Sato asks mysteriously, Kushida nods.

“Yes. However, I made very little contact with him. Takuya Yagami. I had an impression that he's incredibly smart. But I didn't talk to him that much because our grades were different.”

“Then do you know him too?” I asked Horikita.

When I whispered to Horikita, I immediately got an answer.

“No, I do not know.”

“In your case, you don't even seem to remember your classmate's face.”

“I don't deny it. I didn't have enough time to look at people I wasn't interested in.”

Apparently, she really remembers.... No, it seems that she didn't recognize him at first.

Even classmates can't even remember their kouhai's if they haven't met for a long time.

Well, even if you don't remember Kushida, boys will never forget her once they see her.

Since her appearance attracts people too much.

"I'm lucky to be able to go to the same school again with my senpai.

"That's ..."

Kushida is humble. However, if he was in the same junior high school as Yagami, she came out to be a little bit worried.

As an example, why would she be worried?

The example is of course, Kushida's past.

When Kushida was in junior high school, she had that experience of destroying her own class.

And, Horikita who came from the same school and knew the fact brought strong hostility from Kushida. She felt it was dangerous to be known to be the kind of person who broke her class, and she would eliminate them.

If he's from the same junior high school, it's no wonder Yagami would know the story.

"It's no wonder I know. But there's no guarantee that he knows."

The existence of Yagami is not a safe existence for Kushida.

It's normal for older graders to encounter their kouhai's just like some of the students from the same school in the same grade would.

"It's sudden, but since you're my senpai, you won't complain. Can you partner with me?"

They had just reunited, but Yagami made the proposal while showing his smile.

Is this an appeal that he doesn't know anything about her past, or is it an appeal that he didn't care about it?

"Are you sure you're fine with me? If you're a Yagami-kun, you'd better work with someone who can study harder."

Yagami's academic ability is perfect for Class A. Kushida is not just being humble.

Horikita, who was operating her cell phone next to me, was also about to check it with the OAA app.

“I don't know many senpais here. Therefore, I would like to partner with someone I can trust.”

On the app, even if you can know a certain amount of information on students, you cannot know their true human nature.

In that case, it was judgment that it is better to have an acquaintance as a partner rather than someone he didn't know.

“Um, can you let me think about it for a little bit...?”

Was she watching out for Yagami, or was there another reason?



“Of course. I will wait for Kushida-senpai’s reply.”

She decided to hold onto the partner’s offer without teaming up with anyone for a while.

With academic ability A, there is no need for him to rush finding a partner.

Yagami accepted the hold in Kushida’s reply.

“Damn, that’s okay. If I were you, I wouldn’t hesitate to team up.

Sudou seems to be envious of Kushida, since she chose the option of holding it. If he asked Sudou, he would have definitely accepted.

“If so, you have to work harder.”

“Oh... I’m going to do better.”

She wasn’t being mean but rather giving encouragement to Sudou.

I took distance from Horikita immediately.

The reason is that we were seen by waves of other students.

The members of the Ayanokouji group: Keisei, Haruka, Akito, and Airi were all present.

“Haaah, I was so scared.”

As soon as I joined, Airi expressed her impression of Hosen.

“This year’s first-year students were quite similar to Sudou-kun and Ryuuen-kun.”

Haruka, who was watching the commotion from a distance, said with amazement,

Akito, who was standing next to her, stares at the end of the corridor from where Hosen left.

“Miyachi, what’s wrong?”

“A ridiculous guy came in. This school may be quite rough from now on. He’s... In terms of strength, Hosen is not weaker than Sudou or Ryuuen.”

“Do you know him, Miyachi?”

“I’ve never seen him directly. In my hometown, Ryuuen and Hosen were quite the famous people.”

Apparently, Akito lived in a place close to the junior high school where Ryuuen and Hosen attended.

“At my school... In short, there was a strong number of students who could fight, but one day they suddenly disappeared, and it became a commotion. After that, A student two years younger than me, when I was in the first year of junior high school, was sent to the hospital by Hosen.”

“Like a demon? The story sounded like he had a rough time.”

“I used to live in an area famous for the gathering of bad guys.”

“Hey...”

Haruka is a little confused by the words she doesn't understand.

“That's how Hosen controlled the junior high school around him from the very top.”

“Ryuuen-kun was famous too, wasn't he? It was like they met for the first time just now.”

“It was lucky they didn't meet you.”

“By the way, was Miyachi bad too?”

“I mean, I was quite a bad student... That's why I quit that lifestyle. I'm a good student as of right now.”

“...It was until the second year of junior high school that it was rough. From there, I started to do archery.”

“That means you were quite bad, right?”

It was pursued by Haruka in a strange way and Akito scratched his head as if he were in trouble.

“If so, that's kinda cool.”

“Are you different? It's rather cool, your past that is.”

“It's really cool.”

The reason why he is familiar with violent situations is that Akito himself was on that side. Certainly, he had quite the courage when dealing with fights and his movements were quite good.

“What if you shut down Hosen in a fight?”

“You're kidding. Even if I fought, and I were to choose the other party, I wouldn't want to fight Hosen in particular.”

With that Akito raises the white flag before fighting. Rather than his own weakness, he acknowledges the strength of Hosen.

Ibuki also had some sense of fighting, but she couldn't do anything due to the overwhelming body disparity between her and Hosen. Moreover, she couldn't do anything even with her speed.

### 3

After school, I was called out by Horikita, just like yesterday.

When the two of us tried to leave the classroom, Sudou was eager to accompany us. Horikita, who tried to reject him like last time, seemed to be pushed by the enthusiasm to help him until he found someone to be his partner. She started agreeing on the condition that he worked hard on his club activities and study more. I had to admit that for Horikita, it was unexpectedly kind.

However, there might be a good reason for it.

There are about ten days left until the special examination. If you think about the difficulty of the written exam, it is better to be able to have the time and environment where you can concentrate on your studies even by a little bit. However, if he is always concerned about Horikita's trends, he will lose concentration. She wants to find Sudou's partner quickly and make time to concentrate on studying, and I could see through Horikita's idea.

Horikita firmly understands the human being named Ken Sudou, but there is one important thing that she cannot understand. That's Sudou's feelings for Horikita. Doesn't she realize that he just wants to be by her side for no reason?

Of course, I didn't bother to tell her. This is also an important driving force for Sudou.

Horikita decided not to go to the first-year classroom, but to the Keyaki mall.

I wonder if it's because the first graders went to the second-year area during daytime today and got into trouble.

Because it is not necessarily a similar development, but it is a form of consideration.



Or did Horikita change her mind because the first-year Class D student Hosen was a problem child?

I'll soon find out about it.

“Even so, I'm not doing much either. Even though it's been a year since I've been here, it was still quite interesting to go to the Mall”

As soon as we entered the mall, Sudou poked his little finger on his left hand into his ear.

A frank impression of the first graders was spread in the field of our views.

“There are certainly a lot of students getting carried away.”

They're talking about what they're going to buy and what they're going to eat, talking happily here and there.

“And I'm here seriously looking for a partner.”

It's not good for first graders as well as second graders to spend multiple days to decide on a partner. However, there is a big gap between the first and second graders.

It is the difference in the perception of the special examination.

Like the first graders after school yesterday, few students have a sense of crisis.

When we went out of the school, it was more apparent.

“It's no wonder. It was the same situation when we were in the first grade.”

“Yes...”

The students were playing around every day with a large sum of money that had been transferred immediately after entering the school.

Even if it is class A, the situation was still the same.

Aside from the view, it was obvious that they would enjoy this incredible school.

What's most annoying is that there's a difference in penalties for first and second grade students.

If we fail, we must drop out of school, and the first grader loses only three months of private points.

“Look at them being so carefree about this exam.”

“Don't say that, Sudou-kun. Have you forgotten how you were a year ago?”

“Well, I haven't forgotten that. I regret it.”

Because he was a student that was confirmed as the first dropout last year.

Of course, it is not possible to use the relief measures which were used at that time any longer.

The privilege of us being beginners were long gone.

“For now, let's talk to that group.”

Horikita said that after finding three first-year boys sitting on a bench and chatting.

The name of the students are Kakaga, Mikami, Shiratori. All three of them are students who are in the first-year class D and whose academic ability is B or higher. Before calling out, Horikita confirms it through the app just in case.

Is she still aiming for the students in the first year class D?

“Excuse me.”

“..... What is it?”

It would have been clear as soon as they saw that the seniors had called out to them.

Their expression which was happy disappeared, and their expressions changed to being wary.

“I'm looking for a partner to work with in this special exam. You're still unpaired, aren't you?”

“Well, yes. I haven't worked with anyone yet.”

“If it's fine could you let me talk on the premise that we're going to work together?”

“Of course, it's fine. What's your name?”

After receiving the proposal from here, I nod as if the three of us had shown it together. They felt a bit wary, but they decided not to worry.

Sudou also shows a surprised face that the attitude of the three

students were quite serious.

“I'm just very sorry, but what we're looking for is top priority.

“You're looking for a partner to help people with low academic ability from dropping out, aren't you?”

It seems that our problems are already widespread among the first graders.

“Yes. If you understand, it saves time.”

“Uh... That's right... Should I partner up with Sudou?”

The other side also checked our profile on the mobile phone, so there is no hesitation in the story.

“That's right. He's one of them. There are a few others.”

“Oh, I see. Is Sudou-senpai academic ability E+? This is awkward, isn't it?”

It was mildly worded, but it's clear that he pointed out his poor academic ability.

Sudou seemed to be dissatisfied though it was true, but it was still great without putting it out to the last minute.

“Well, you can afford it, can't you?”

The two students looked towards the first grader named Shiratori who was sitting on the right side.

“I have an A evaluation in Academic ability.”

“That's right. I wouldn't say it's impossible for us to work together.”

“Then---How about this?”

Shiratori spread his hand, made a par, and suggested it to Horikita.

For a moment, Horikita looked at us without knowing what it was.

“It's fine is it not? You want me to partner with you, don't you? Then it's decided, isn't it?”

Horikita also understood the words.

“..... I wonder if it's about private points.”

“It's natural. If I can team up with a smart person, I can aim for the top. It is natural that it becomes such a flow because they throw away the rewards which can be obtained in the upper rank and it is made up

by compensation.”

“About the points? 50,000... It's too expensive.”

For Sudou, who is always living a life of lack of money, he presents an exceptional low amount of points.

“Senpai, please stop joking. I won't accept it for only 50,000.”

“Ah?”

“It's half a million. If you give me half a million points, I can partner up with him here now.”

“Five hundred thousand!?”

“It's hard to get a smart partner, isn't it? We're studying a lot too you know.”

It seems to be very different that their time of admission is very different from ours.

They have begun to understand the structure of this school from an early stage and understand their own value.

Then, they would understand the importance of private points.

It's a situation that they're able to see it like that.

“It's natural for you to get a reward as long as you team up with someone with low academic ability. But...”

“Oh, it sounds like- you don't have half a million points?”

“I know, just shut up.”

Three first-year students laugh bitterly when they hear about the news of this situation that they leaked carelessly.

“It's natural to want points, but it's not good to have short-term greed, no?”

“What do you mean?”

As a representative of the three, Shiratori asks Horikita back.

“If you sell our favor to us here, we might be able to help in a similar situation in the future.”

Horikita explains that it is advantageous later if you make a favor other than a private point.

“I don't think that the senior who came to Horikita who is academic ability A can be useful but what about Sudou-senpai and Ayanokouji-

senpai?”

“That's not necessarily the case. This school is not just about studying. Sometimes physical abilities will also be required in future examinations.”

Especially when it comes to Sudou, he's the only one with physical ability A+ in the second grade.

Horikita's aim was to use that point as a weapon.

“I know. But after all, it's class D, isn't it? If I sell my favor now, they'll be no point since we'll soon rise to Class B and class A.”

Shiratori judged calmly and objectively answers so.

If you look at this situation, Horikita should understand.

“..... Right. That's what I'm talking about.”

It is not until you think deeply about the smooth acceptance of this invitation and the amount of points you have presented.

“What do you mean?”

“Before you senpais came, we were approached by another class in the second-year.”

“I'm not going to sell my academic ability at a low price.”

“Yes. Please think of a better deal as we can't accept it unless we get a reasonable point of doing so.”

In front of Shiratori, Horikita continues to talk without losing her composure.

“Certainly, you can't sell yourself cheaply. But did the other classes really offer you points?”

“What do you mean?”

Shiratori showed a slightly displeased face. It seems that the pride of academic ability A student was hurt to some extent.

“You're the same class D like us. I don't think the upper class will talk to you that easily.”

This is Horikita's Bluff. if the academic ability is high, even if it is class D, you'll have a lot of value in this special exam.

A word to confirm who and how much points were offered to them.

Shiratori rebutted Horikita in a slightly rough tone with his pride

stimulated.

“It's true. I was invited by Hashimoto-senpai in class A from the second-years. Also, I've been offered a reasonable amount of private points from them.”

That's right, two people agreed with him.

“We're not the only ones. Most of the smart students were offered points by them.”

As Horikita expected, it was the second-year class A and the second-year class C that began to act.

“Yes... In that case, we can't live up to your expectations now.”

“Oh, but if you give me 500,000 points, I won't refuse. I'm willing to wait for about a week. In the meantime, if you manage to give me half a million points, I'll be happy to be put it together with Sudou-senpai.”

The amount of points to be able to prevent withdrawal surely is 500,000 private points.

Of course, it is expensive, but if you change your perspective, you can buy safety with that amount of points.

But there's no way to make a quick decision here.

“By the way... How much did Hashimoto-kun offer for you to cooperate with him?”

I want to know the specific amount of points, but Shiratori was not stupid.

“It's an unspeakable promise. But if it's half a million points, I'll just cooperate with you senpais right now”

“All right. Let's consider that point. So, I'd like to ask you for a favor. Can you introduce us to some of the students in your class?”

“Introduce?”

“We are ready to cooperate to some extent. But it takes time and effort to talk to each person and re-explain this offer multiple times. If I can, I want you to gather people and have a concrete discussion there.”

While the cooperative relationship was flickering, she did not

mention what to cooperate on.

The three of them look at each other, but they looked a bit scared.

“It's... It's a little difficult to be entrusted with that kind of role. .... then, right?”

“Ah. If we do that without permission, we'll be scolded by Hosen-kun, right?”

The name ‘Hosen’ came out of the conversation between the three of them.

It can be seen through the words and attitudes of them to know that they're afraid of Hosen.

“Excuse me, senpai, can you ask other people to help with that.”

After all, he is the man who holds the key to the first-year's class D.

He sensed that the air had clearly changed and decided not to pursue Horikita deeply.

“Thank you. I'll talk to you again when I need to.”

“Yes, yes. I will be waiting for you.”

We walked away from the bench and started moving to the cafe on the second floor. Looking back, the swan appeared to be calling someone in a hurry with his cell phone on his hand.

“I've got the information, but it's hard to say that I've made progress. The only thing that is certain is that unless it's a ridiculous amount such as 500,000 points, they'll never cooperate with me right away.”

“They made such a silly offer.”

“It's definitely a silly amount of money. But it's true that you can't sell yourself cheaply.”

If you have an evaluation of academic ability A, it's even more so.

It's a much better way to earn than to get the top score in the exam and aim for the 100,000 points.

“So, I guess the only way to help out is to pay private points to someone after all?”

“It's not easy to say that there are students who will do it free of charge.”

The fact that private points will be essential for this exam will be important to know. It's better to think that the whole first grade knows about the exchange of private points, not just Swan. This may be one of the strategies of Sakayanagi and Ryuen. The exchange of private points is something I'd like to avoid. However, by making a big deal of acquisitions, they are aware that free service is a loss.

However, there was a thing to be worried about the conversation with Swan earlier. (TL note, I have no idea who Swan is)

Shiratori said he would wait for a week, even though he had already been approached. Even if it is a period to get that much points, it is worrisome that the three of them will lie. Some students want to be safe by finding a partner early.

I wonder if those three are just bullish by chance, or...

"Even if I ask the other class D students as it is, I think they will give the same answer."

It was good until I looked at the class D students in the first year.

It may be said that if you do look, you will make Hosen angry.

From that utterance, there is no doubt that Hosen is the only person who is controlling the entire First-year class D.

"Perhaps Hosen is giving instructions to his classmates. You are free to work with anyone anywhere, but you can only make more than 500,000 points immediately, and put on hold if it's from class A."

"But if you do that, wouldn't only first-year class D remain unsold?"

"It means that they are looking to eventually sell off"

"Ah? I don't know what that means."

"It's the second-year students who are afraid of penalties for not having a partner. He thinks he can use that penalty as a weapon and eventually get a lot of private points."

If honor students other than the first-year class D are sold out, they will eventually have to cooperate with them and offer more points even if they don't like it, even if it is a million or two million private points.

"It's a reckless strategy that they're using and they're not thinking



about the future.”

“Tell me the specific policy of how to fight again.”

“The policy and strategy of the first-year class D have already come into view. Based on that, what do you think, Horikita?”

Since the second-year class A and class C extreme competition has begun, will we take the form of breaking here, or build a relationship of trust by accepting a lot of lower-level students regardless of the class, such as Ichinose, Will we go with a policy of appealing for cooperation to whichever class? That I wanted to know.

“When I got an overview of this special exam, I decided to set three goals.”

“Three goals?”

Sudou seems to be interested in it very much, as he blurted out that question.

“The most important thing is not to dropout, and this goes without saying.”

Sudou nods.

“And then, in class-specific battles, we aim for third place or higher overall.”

“Third place? You mean you throw away the first place or the second place from the beginning?”

“No one would tell you to throw it away. I just said I was going to aim for third place or higher.”

It is true that the word would implement getting first and second place, but it doesn't seem to be that way.

And perhaps it's also related to the third goal.

“The third is not to participate in money games. We're going to fight these three principles.”

“Eh...? But...”

“I know what you want to say. If we don't compete on private points, we can't win first. But even if we fight with the points of our combined second-year class D, the risk and return are not commensurate. Even if the overall rank is the first place, the class point obtained is 50 points.

Even if you convert it into one year, you can only get around 2 million points.”

It takes 39 people with 5,000 points per head a month, and 2,145,000 private points will be spent on the remaining 11 months, except for the transfer in April that has already passed.

“If we were to pull one person in for 500,000 points, it would be spent when we pull in more than five people. It's not a sweet battle to catch and we will only be able to get around 4 to 5 Academic Ability A students.

4,485,000 private points for the next two years, that is, even if you anticipate graduation. That's the maximum number of people that can be retracted in theory. Moreover, this is a prerequisite that it is possible to draw surely in 500,000 or less, and to be able to take the first place in the overall ranking by grade. If you look at the risks, it is more likely to be more efficient to wait for future special tests and use our private points then.

“Private and class points are not equal. I know there's more to pay off. But I thought that even if we put all the points here, we shouldn't overdo it if we didn't win well. I wonder if I'm wrong, Ayanokouji-kun”

“No, your decision is correct.” I answered.

The difference between the overall value of the academic ability originally possessed by the second-year class D and the overall value of the second-year class A is obvious. When I thought I was going to win overall, I don't think it would be an advantage to draw only 11 people to our side through points. Of course, Horikita will move flexibly. If you have a student who can help you for a low amount of points. It is better that we do not fight by the bill bundle to the last.

“In order to achieve our three goals, I think we should still aim to negotiate with the first-year class D.”

“Why is that? It's because we can't join them for less than half a million points under the instructions of Hosen, can we?”

“That's true for honor students. However, there are many students

in the first-year class D, and there will be multiple students with academic ability C and below. What do you think would happen if we left it as it is?"

"What's going to happen..."

"Students who have low academic ability will most likely not be able to find a partner for themselves and will receive penalties."

When I answered, Horikita nodded and continued to speak.

"There's no way they are going to throw away the chance to get the three months of not receiving private points penalty. In other words, Hosen must break his current attitude somewhere."

Even if all honor students sell themselves for half a million private points, not everyone will agree with their unreasonable demand. It's a matter of whether he cares about us second-years dropping out or not.

"If he's looking to win, then there's always a chance for us to negotiate."

It seems that Horikita is going to face the first-year class D that everyone wants to avoid.

"That said, it's dangerous for all 39 of us to try to get into Hosenkun's class. We have to spread out the risk as much as possible."

If this negotiation is not settled, students with low academic ability will most likely receive the penalty.

"Now that the exam has just begun, it's no wonder that there are students who can work together under exceptional conditions."

"I hope so... I don't know if it exists or not."

"At any rate, the only way to find a good partner is to negotiate with multiple students."

"Well, if you're looking for someone to be your partner, I'm here."

When we were climbing up the stairs and heading to the cafe on the second floor, we heard a voice from behind. When I turned around, a female student on the first floor was looking at us with a big smile on her face. As soon as my eyes met with hers, she slowly came up the stairs.

The first person to show a suspicious face came to Horikita.

“Did you hear what we were talking about?”

“Uh... I just called out to my senior, because I happened to overhear the conversation.”

She set her point of view on Horikita, who spoke to her without looking at us.

“Senpai, what is your name and academic ability?”

“..... I'm Horikita from second-year class D. I've got an A on judgment on my academic ability. So?”

“Hey, you're smart.”

“What's your name?” Horikita asked.

“I'm from the first-year class A, Amasawa Ichika. It's the same as Horikita's senpai. My academic ability is also A.

She looked like a smart student and didn't have the appeal of a gal.

Just in case, Horikita confirmed her evaluations in the OAA app.

“If you're going to aim for the high rewards, why don't you team up with me?”

Amasawa said such a thing without hesitating.

It's not impossible for them to take the first place if two people of the academic ability A team up. As for Horikita, she has deliberately lowered her score in the past for Sudou, and considering that, her evaluation should be higher than A.

It was an unexpected invitation, but Horikita wanted to prioritize finding a partner for Sudou.

It's a pure coincidence, A student with an academy ability of A reached out to her.

If she asked students who have low academic ability here, they would most likely be shunned.

“Thanks, but I'm not looking for a partner right now. Could you possibly partner up with Sudou-kun?”

Horikita introduces Sudou to her.

Sudou was a little puzzled, but lightly bowed down.

“Well, what is your academic ability Sudou-senpai?”

“E+. I can't say it's a very good evaluation.”

Far from academy ability A.

Amasawa should have already seen his information through the OAA app.

“I see. In other words, Horikita is helping him find a partner to stop him from leaving the school.”

The situation is gripped, and Amasawa looked at Sudou.

“Academic Ability E+. If we partner up, my ranking will be halfway below the middle rather than the top.”

“That's right. There's little benefit to you.”

I thought that she should have already refused Horikita's offer by now, but she was showing no sign of doing so.

“Well, since you asked me, I wouldn't mind cooperating with you.”

She was clearly better than those three previous people.

She turned her eyes towards me.

“What about you, senpai? Looking for a partner in the same way?”

“He has academic ability C. I'm not in a hurry to get a partner for him. If Sudou-kun doesn't work, I'd appreciate it if you could partner with him at least.”

“No, that's—”

It was the kindness of Horikita, but I must put a stop her plan here.

Don't just randomly assign me a partner.

“Do you have any complaints?”

“No.... But”

“Ah, hey. I haven't said I was going to work together with you guys yet, have I?”

Amasawa stops us, seeing the story going on.

“Do you need any conditions to work with either of them?”

“Conditions, conditions? Well, I have the right to put it out like that.”

By cutting off Horikita here, we must try to draw the condition from Amasawa.

The basic policy of avoiding competing with other classes for

private points will not change, but if it is cheap, there will be room for consideration. After that, I pray that it is not a high amount of points unlike Swan from before.

“I like strong people”

Amasawa laughed like a little devil, saying something that seemed to have nothing to do with this exam.

“What the hell are you talking about?”

Horikita, who thought she was going to ask for private points, frowns suspiciously.

“I was wondering what I was going to do with this special exam. I have been studying hard for most of my life so far, and I was going to work with people in the vicinity of academic ability A like Horikita-senpai to get to the top. Or do you want to clear it with some ease? So, if I want to clear this exam comfortably, I want to at least team up with the person I like?”

It's certainly better than teaming up with a nasty guy or a guy who didn't care about this examination.

“I like strong men.”

“Now, what do you guys think?”

Horikita spins her head hard to understand.

“In other words, you're asking if Sudou-kun is strong or not?”

“Correct. It's not mentally strong, but if he's physically strong or not. Well, if I look at his physique, it seems he does sports and stuff.”

Amasawa turned her fingertip to Sudou knowing his academic ability is quite low and still didn't care.

Sudou, who has confidence in his body, nods and appeals while being a little shy.

“Would you like to partner up with me?”

Amasawa reaches out and touches Sudou's cheeks.

“Well, if you have Academic ability A, it would be the best form for me. Are you sure?”

“If you're really strong, then sure.”

After that, the thin fingertip crawled onto Sudou's chest plate, and

Sudou is fascinated by her bewitching sign.

“I’m strong, I really am.”

“I don’t hate people who are confident in their strength.”

“What do you mean if he’s strong?”

Horikita, who is Sudou’s watcher, asked Amasawa.

“I like strong people in the same way as their academic ability. That’s why I think strong people are good.”

“I think he’ll live up to your expectations. I can guarantee Sudou-kun’s skill.”

“You can’t convince me just by words. After all, I want to see it directly.”

“...You want to see it with your own eyes?”

“I’m trying to get a few strong guys in the second grade and let them fight each other, then I’m going to partner up with the strongest person.”

“Are you kidding me?” You can’t do that.”

“Why?” I’ve been talking seriously here since the beginning.”

“Let’s go, the bell has rung sound. It’s a waste of time to be here.”

Sudou also cut out because he didn’t think Amasawa was taking this very seriously.

He wasn’t interested with Amasawa’s appeal even in the slightest.

“I just can’t waste more time here.”

If you ask her, this is probably just a game to her.

“Certainly, I don’t go out of my way to work with E+ academic ability students. “

If Sudou were to be perfect in both the class ability, then Amasawa the buyer would’ve surely accepted this deal.

A situation that can be called a kind, good luck. Sudou will have the right to partner with students of academic ability A. It’s not like the penalty the first-years will receive is that bad compared to the second-years, so they’re probably not all that serious.

“You’re not joking, you’re quite serious, aren’t you?”

Horikita’s eyes were serious.

“Of course.”

“Yes, if so. In that case, I'll get serious about it and tell you what I'm talking about.”

“Oh, hey Suzune?”

“It's OK. I want to work with strong people.”

“Yes, if so. Then Sudou-kun, you should accept this offer.”

“Well, wait, Suzune. There's no way this school will allow you to use violence on students. And Sudou has also matured.”

Last year, Sudou developed into a big problem due to the incident with class C and Ryuuken, and caused a stir.

And today, the fact that Hosen came, also caused a commotion.

“Certainly, a quarrel is not a compliment. But if the two sides agree, there will be no inconvenience. Don't you think so too? Ayanokouji-kun”

I instantly thought about what Horikita said.

If you say there is no problem, the answer is obviously no.

Whether you win or lose, the school will not allow us to fight, even if you decide not to object.

However, Horikita dares to respond in a way as if she's accepting it.

“That's right. There's no way school officials would agree to a fight, but if students agreed and fight, it's not going to be much of a problem.”

I dared to answer as if there was no problem.

“Oh, hey Ayanokouji!”

“Besides, no one can beat Sudou-kun in terms of fighting skill, no matter who it is in the second grade.”

“That's right.”

Sudou didn't understand, but Horikita and I alternately threw the ball together and established a conversation.

The important thing here is not to affirm the quarrel.

It is to show with confidence that Sudou is the strongest even if he does not fight.



“It's a chance to say clearly, Sudou-kun. If you think about it normally, it's extremely difficult to get you together with a student with academic ability A. Moreover, if you compete in terms of strength in a fight you are clearly better than anyone else. You should take this offer without hesitation.”

There is no way that second-year students who are familiar with the rules of this school will take a careless battle.

Moreover, if the other party is Sudou, the result is more obvious.

In other words, if she accepts this here, you won't actually have a fight, and even if you have someone to challenge you, you can back out from it.

“It's okay. I'm kind of excited.”

Amasawa, who has just entered the school, should not understand the school rules very well.

She can't understand the things that are different from an ordinary junior high and high school.

“But can you promise me one thing first? If there are no participants other than Sudou-kun, you would become a partner with Sudou-kun.”

Horikita wants an important arrangement here.

If Amasawa doesn't agree here, the story won't move forward.

“That's right. I promise you that. The fact that no challengers show up is a win-win.”

Horikita nodded as if she was satisfied with her wording.

“Okay? Sudou-kun”

“--Oh, if you don't have a problem with it Suzune, I don't have any problem at all.”

He strongly clenched his fists.

The proposal from Amasawa might have been a product of chance, and she was a value of thousands of moneys made to Horikita.

“Then, I'll be recruiting in the whole chat from the app. If you're confident in your skills, please send me a direct email to me that you're going to be entering today.”

“Heh. Whoever comes, I'll show them who's boss.”

Conveniently, Sudou did not understand Horikita's idea.

Therefore, he must be excited that he might be fighting for nothing.

“I wonder if we can specify the place. I want to avoid places that are inadvertently visible to school”

“Yes, it is. I think my seniors understand better, and I'll leave that to you.”

I'll get the last confirmation before I send it to you.

“Then, how about an arm wrestle fight. That nice?”

In return, When Horikita nodded, Amasawa slowly saw the three of us.

Then, the screen of her mobile phone is darkened, and she placed it in her pocket.

“Yeah, I think it is”

I thought it was a sudden change of heart, but it doesn't seem to be so.

Judging from that expression, she should see that the other side was also trying and measuring.

However, both Horikita and Sudou panicked in the change of heart in Amasawa.

“I wonder why.”

“I've been recruiting, but I don't think the other party is going to come. Looking at Sudou's physique and the attitude of Horikita-senpai and Ayanokouji-senpai, I find that he is strong and top class among the second graders.”

I understood that there was no need for her make a fight and compare their strengths.

The play that Horikita and I played, with Sudou as the element. These effects seem to have gone out too much.

If Horikita had noticed after the recruitment, Horikita would admit cancelling.

Horikita reveals her dissatisfaction because she cannot understand.

“Are you making fun of us?”

“Hey, that's not the case. It's interesting just to be clear. I just want to see it with my own eyes and have fun. So, don't get angry like that, senpai.”

Amasawa said while pressing her index finger against her lips.

“Give me a chance and forgive me.”

Horikita intended to control it but is swayed by the unique pace of Amasawa.

She doesn't seem to go very well with this type of thing.

“I like strong guys, next to men who can cook.”

“Cooking?”

The new proposal from Amasawa was also completely unrelated to this special examination.

“Sudou-senpai, how about you cook for me?”

“H-Huh?!”

Sudou, who was full of confidence until earlier, is surprised by the unexpected proposal.

“It has to be delicious of course on the big premise, and I'll have you cook the food I request.”

“No, no, I've never cooked since I was born.”

“Is that so?” Well then, I wonder if I should look around for other people.”

In order not to let that happen, Horikita interrupted.

“I wonder if it's ok to replace Sudou-kun.”

“That's not good. I told you, didn't I? I like men who can cook. And there's no point in partnering unless it's a person who can cook.”

In other words, if it is a woman, she won't allow them to cook because she only wants men.

“What if I give up on Sudou-senpai and find a senior who can cook?” Oh, even if you can teach him in a hurry, you won't have enough time, will you?”

Ichika laughed like a little devil.

“From now on, you should turn Sudou-senpai into a culinary master? But I wonder if you'll be able to make it in time. I'm popular, so maybe

I'll decide on a partner even if I don't do it today.”

As a warning, it won't be long before she is, and she will decide on a partner eventually.

There are many excellent students besides Horikita in the second year.

You don't have to take the risk of working with Sudou.

So, to speak, the cheeky attitude and playfulness, is what the girl named Amasawa is showing.

“If you change your mind even a little, you're done.”

However, none of us knew a classmate in our class that has a low academic ability and is a boy that is good at cooking.

At this point, there are no substitutes that come to mind.

Then, the order from Amasawa might be only negative for our class.

It is more meaningful to give up and ask another student.

When we did not give an answer, Amasawa added,

“All right. Then special service for you. If there is a man who can cook well and is able to satisfy my tongue, she will team up with Sudou-san, who's a strong person.”

A little concession from Amasawa is proposed here.

Amasawa wants to partner with a man who is either strong or a good cook.

Indeed, Amasawa's taste will be hard to satisfy.

“It's like working with someone who's a good cook or working with someone who's strong in a fight.”

She said that even other boys could help Sudou if they could satisfy her.

How will Horikita respond to Amasawa's wishes?

But the problem is that I don't know any students in my class that can cook.

There will be a big lack of time to learn now.

“Ayanokouji. Surely, you've boasted to me that you were good at cooking before?”

Horikita asks me about my cooking skills in a dignified manner.

I've never talked about such a thing, even I'm not proud of it.

It's easy to deny, but it seems like we need to keep it together.

There is not much possibility that Sudou can partner with a student with academic ability A.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that cooking is my only area of expertise."

"That's right. If Amasawa-san forgives me, I wonder if you'll be fine with Ayanokouji?"

"If it was a boy, anyone would be fine. But are you really good at it? You can back out now, my taste buds are pretty hard to satisfy."

"Of course, it's okay. Right?"

"Well, that's right."

As soon as I affirmed it, Amasawa immediately clapped her hands.

"Well then, you'll have to show me your skills right now"

Deployment too steep. However, this might be the one like the sealing hand of Amasawa.

In order not to give time to learn cooking by giving me some grace time.

She's trying to figure out if I'm really a good cook.

As it is a lie to keep Amasawa together, Horikita cannot answer yes here.

Even if I cook with my current skills, I know how good I am.

Even if it is not strictly judged, I will definitely not be able to satisfy her.

"I want to do that, but I wonder if we'll have time. Ayanokouji-kun and I are in contact with first-years in order to help our classmates find their partners. There are many other students who need the help besides Sudou-kun. If other classes get ahead of us, we'll receive quite a lot of damage. Even at this very moment, our rivals are running around looking for partners."

"You know that, don't you?" As she explained the situation.

"If I could, I'd like to have time until after school on Friday."

Saying that, I can have time to practice more on cooking.

She tried to give me a few more days as she told her to do the test after school on Friday.

It is a suggestion that you can make some time on the weekend.

“I see. It's certainly not good for me to take too much time.”

Then, Amasawa made a new proposal.

“I don't mind if it's late today at night. Is it fine?”

“A first-year student entering and leaving the second-year dormitory in the middle of the night, and since it will be a boy's room, it will be a major problem.”

“I see. But waiting until the weekend is a bit long. I'm going to lose the chance to work with another senpai, right?”

After all, the proposal for her to wait until the weekend did not work.

This time, a severe reply came back from Amasawa.

“But this is also something important, and I'll wait for one day. If you say you can't cook homemade food after school tomorrow, I'll partner up with someone else.”

Perhaps this is the last line of cooperation as she said that.

If we were to delay this to the weekend, she knew that I would be given time to practice.

Horikita seems to have dragged me into something unnecessary.

“That's right. There is no denying that it will impose a burden on you. And I don't want to give time for you to practice cooking.”,

“No, I wasn't thinking that far.” Horikita said

“.....That's okay. Then, will you agree?”

The preparation period is only one day. However, it is not possible to get the cooperation of Ichika if we do not agree.

It can be taken as a bitter measure, but Horikita announces the decision...

“It's decided then.”

“There is no problem with it being after school tomorrow”

I said, and Amasawa readily consented.

“However, you better not give more excuses if he is able to satisfy

you.

“You’re funny. I promise then. If I decide that his cooking skills can satisfy me, I’ll partner up with Mr. Sudou at that time.”

Although it was a verbal promise, Amasawa answered with a simple nod.

“Please, Ayanokouji. Get my partner with your cooking skills!”

I’ll try my best, but I don’t think it’s going to be that easy.

“Then, maybe I can meet you in front of Keyaki mall at 4:30 after school tomorrow, Ayanokouji-senpai?”

“Keyaki mall?” Not the dormitory?”

“What I’m going to ask you to make is a secret, and of course you have to buy some ingredients, don’t you?”

I see. Then, who will be paying? I thought in my mind.

“Can I go with you?”

Horikita offers to accompany us.

However, Amasawa won’t accept this that easily.

“That’s not good. You can give him advice when I’m not looking plus my judgement is pretty strict.”

In other words, tomorrow, I must cook for her myself.

“You’re okay, aren’t you Ayanokouji-senpai.”

“Oh, no problem.”

For the time being, I’ll accept it obediently, but this has become quite a problem.

“Then I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Amasawa went down the stairs with satisfaction.

“Horikita, I think we’ll be in trouble.”

“Shut up. I’ll think of a strategy.”

Even if you think about the strategy, the time is only one day.

I have only the minimum cooking skills, so how far can I do?

## ICHIKA'S EXAM

The special examination entered its third day today. Wednesday is approaching.

When the OAA was updated at 8:00 A.M, the options were inevitably narrowing down.

“34 more pairs were formed?”

This is 56 pairs when combined with those from Monday.

With a maximum of 157 pairs, more than 30% of the students have decided on partners at an early stage.

It was second-year Class B that added to the number of pairs. In other words, Ichinose was involved in a lot of them.

Apparently, the first-year students from the exchange party decided to think carefully and work together with Ichinose.

Basically, it can be confirmed that many of the first-year students with low academic ability are working with Ichinose and others.

After that, it is presumed that the point trading was successful as the name of some first-year honor students disappear from the list, and the name of several students disappeared in the second year class C. Five students from our class, including Kushida, had decided on a partner. If you check the page of the first-year Class B on OAA, Takuya Yagami has also decided on a partner. He might have teamed up with Kushida.

What's strange, however, is that no one in the first-year class D have decided on a partner.

This is the only class in the first or second school grade without a



single pair.

If I don't move in earnest, I'm going to get stuck very soon.

Looking at my grades objectively, a few students might come up and say, 'Let's team up'. Whether they're a student with academic ability or not, it's natural that they want to work with smart students. Unlike the second graders, who have come to be able to act for the benefit of their classes, first-year students will not be able to afford to look out for others. Even classmates are more aware that they are rivals.

At least I'll be postponing my actions till the top scores decide on their partners.

Tsukishiro most likely will not show any mercy in this exam. Therefore, I'm going to wait and see if the white room student asks me to become their partner.

Of course, students who ask me to work with them, and students who easily allow me to work together, are dangerous signs.

However, if I hesitate without deciding on a partner forever, the possibility of being teamed up with the spy of Tsukishiro will increase. I need to be sure that I do not pair up with that student, but it's probably not going to be easy.

It's hard to imagine what kind of facade they will put on after entering this school.

I learned everyone's face, name, and grades at OAA, but of course there are no hints to get from it.

If all 160 freshmen were my opponents, it will be a sure-fire attack and I won't be able to escape...

I thought of such a stupid thing, but I don't think that Tsukishiro has the power to go that far.

No, he definitely doesn't.

The important thing is to think about how to survive, even if everyone is an enemy.

At any rate, I need to find a safe student from the 104 unpaired people left now.

Children raised in the white room are not more biased by gender.

Basically, a gender equality policy is set out, so it is impossible to narrow it down from that direction.

Then, how can you narrow down the possibilities? One of the criteria is 'physique'.

The food in the white room comes out with everything that is managed in every detail. It is basically impossible for children who grow up in that environment to become obese. In other words, if you choose a student with an obese physique, you can avoid white room students. A simple diagram comes to mind.

However, this is not absolute. It's possible that the White Room students have been preparing for me to drop out for some time now. It's not impossible to be in a plump or thin shape if you feel like it. If you've endured a tough curriculum, it's easy to get by.

However, even without that, the doubt remains in choosing the student whose body shape has deviated from the standard at any time. OAA doesn't show the whole picture, so I can't say for certain, but only two students are blatantly obese.

The possibility that both are students sent by Tsukishiro cannot be ruled out. It is assumed that there are not only white room students but also thugs who have been found from the general public.

Tsukishiro would have offered them a better life if they can get me to drop out.

Next, whether it is possible to narrow down from academic ability. It's also difficult.

If you're a white room student, it is not difficult to get a perfect score on the entrance exam, they could have gotten A or A+ on academic ability. In other words, you can also control their grades freely.

I'm sure they have heard about the introduction of OAA. It would not be surprising even if they had academic ability E.

In the same way, it is impossible to narrow down the students from class A or D by affiliation classes.

It sucks I know, but there is no material to narrow down anything.

What I'm going to do from now is...

To directly look at the students with their own eyes to confirm the truth. If I'm sure that they're not an enemy, I can pair up with them.

I set one rule for myself.

I'm going to school today, eating lunch, and having the cooking test after school. In such a day, I call out to the first year in the order in which I saw them. Then, start with the students and get the cooperation of first-years. Since there is no way the opponent will send in a student who can be found out by observing, there is no choice but to fight with the element that cannot be intervened by chance.

My academic ability C is not high enough to be a weapon, but it does not mean that there are no students willing to team up with me.

## 1

I went out of the dorm and headed to school.

I found two first-year girls talking to each other.

Their names are Kasuga Kurihara and Tetsuko Konishi. Both are first-year Class A students. Seeing them made me remember Kushida as they were very similar in appearance.

Unfortunately, both are excellent students with academic ability A that confirmed their partners on the first day. It is impossible to invite them as partners.

Well, it's not like I was looking for a partner, so it doesn't matter.

I thought about talking to the girl about working together to help our class...but it was hard to approach her.

Talking to them under the pretext of partnering up for the special exam is one thing, but how does a second-year boy look like if he suddenly went and barged into their conversation? I thought of such a thing.

It would be another thing if it was Hirata, he would be able to talk to them easily since he's quite popular.

In any case, there is no reason for me to rush.

It's not advisable to compromise here, that's what I decided. But I didn't have much time as we were nearing the school building. Rather than interrupting their conversation, I decided to wait for their talk to end.

“Good morning, Ayanokouji-senpai!”

When I was looking at the situation, I was called out like that from behind.

The first-year student I saw today was Tsubasa Nanase, who was acting with Hosen the other day.

She gave me a carefree smile.

“Oh, good morning.” I replied

I wasn't expecting her to call out to me, so I was a bit slow to answer.



“Do you have some business with those two girls? Shall I call them for you?”

Nanase, who is a first-year student, suggested that, but if you do so, it is likely to be a discussion with three girls. It’s going to be a hard time for me if that happened.

“No, it’s okay.”

“Is that so?”

Nanase walks at almost the same speed while looking a bit curious as to why I said that.

The conversation with Nanase started unexpectedly. Well, I was thankful to meet Nanase at this timing.

It cannot be said that the development of being called out by a first-year student is coincidental, so there’s a good chance she was waiting for me to go to school and timed it well. So, I should be wary of Nanase and other first-years who initiate a conversation. It is just like yesterday’s event, when it was Ichika Amasawa who called out to us instead of it being the other way around.

“I’m sorry that Hosen-kun was rude the other day.”

“No, you don’t have to apologize for it. It didn’t affect me in any way.”

“But there’s no difference in the trouble I’ve caused. While I was following the way to stop Hosen-kun from acting like that, I felt a certain lack of strength.”

Unlike the rough Hosen, Nanase is very sociable and has a polite tone. Her academic ability is also high at B, and she is perfect as a partner. It shouldn’t be strange if many second-graders already approached her for the special exam, but on the third day of exam, she was still unpartnered.

However, it seems that this is probably because of the first-year Class D policy.

In addition to academic ability, physical ability, decision making ability, and social contribution are also well-balanced and high grades in C+ or higher. At first glance, there are no problems. That’s why the

question comes to mind, what is the reason why Nanase Tsubasa is in the D class? The image of the D class is basically that the students with some problems to be assigned to it. For example, Yosuke and Kushida seemed to have no defects on the surface, but when their shell cracks, you will be able to see what their true natures are.

In other words, the possibility that Nanase has such a hidden problem cannot be denied. However, there is no guarantee that the same trend applies to this year's first-year class D.

As far as I'm concerned, it's okay if there are some problems in personality and values. Whether it wishes as a partner or as a co-worker, the only important thing is whether Nanase Tsubasa is a person on the side of Tsukishiro.

I'm worried about that eye-catching look that I showed with Hosen when we first met. His eyes are lurking in the ring, and his natural eyes are turned to me.

"Have you decided on a partner or candidate for the upcoming special exam?"

I decided to ask a few questions to get to know the person named Nanase.

"Me? No, I haven't decided."

"Then, has anyone asked you to become their partner?"

"That's right. I've been asked by seniors in the second-year class A and the second-year class C, and offered private points, but I refused."

It is still within expectations for a student with academic ability B.

"Why are you holding off on deciding on a partner?"

I decided to be a bit more aggressive.

"I'm sorry, but I can't answer that."

Nanase said that while bowing her head in apology.

"Responding in the way that you did, it's a good answer, you don't need to apologize."

It is difficult to decide at this point whether it is a problem of Nanase as an individual or first-year class D as a whole.

In that case, let's attack from a slightly different angle.

“If you like, why don’t you work together with second-year class D to find the right partner?”

I made such a proposal including myself. Horikita also thinks of the first-year class D as the key, and Hosen also has some feelings for the second-year class D. It wasn’t a bad suggestion.

“Cooperation between classes... Is it?”

“Ah. Many students are trying to team up with highly academic students for their grades. But then, students with low academic ability will inevitably be unelected and overflow. Both first-year and second-year students are exposed to the risk of withdrawal if they work together with students with low academic ability.”

“Yes. I understand that. I want to avoid it if I can.”

“That’s right. To do that, you need to find the right balance. You have to find a partner who can’t get higher but won’t get a red point.”

“We are class D. It is overwhelmingly inferior as a brand. That is why there is a possibility that the first-year class D, which is in the same order, will come to talk.”

“How about it?”

“I agree, too. If I can, I would like to cooperate with Ayanokouji-senpai. It’s just...”

“Just...?”

“I don’t know how much the people in my class can help me. Some of the students who are confident in their studies in my class are already deciding on a partner.”

Many of the key students in this exam have begun to aim for top performers by choosing a good partner. The two girls walking in front of me are just like that.

The reason why we have not established our partners is that there are other problems, such as point aspects.

The most important point in this test is that the top 30% will be rewarded. The act of rescuing a student with low academic ability also leads to abandoning the reward.

“We don’t need everyone’s cooperation. Perhaps with some



adjustments, we can get through the special exam without having to get too much help.”

Even if some of the students in the class are taken, there will be no major problems.

“That’s right. But it’s not that there’s no other problems.”

The proposal itself was accepted by Nanase, but she showed a dark expression.

It was not difficult to think of the reason and it soon occurred to me.

“I’m sure it’s Hosen... that is not agreeing? He seems to be showing a big presence in class D.”

In addition, I put my hand in the inside situation of the first-year class D.

From the contact with the swan taking the other day, I got the information that seems to be almost certain.

“Yes. Many boys and girls have already begun to follow Hosen-kun’s instructions in a quiet way.”

What was only speculation turned into conviction.

Hosen seemed to already have gained control over the class.

It may be a strategy of Hosen to not allow anyone from first-year class D to choose a partner.

If that’s the case, Hosen is not only a student who has a big body, but also has the insight, observation and calmness to observe his surroundings.

“Are you in a special position? You don’t seem to be afraid of Hosen”

“I will never give in to violence.”

Such powerful words which cannot be imagined from her appearance came back.

Her remark doesn’t seem to be a bluff, so I assume that it is backed by something.

I could see that kind of confidence coming from her pure eyes.

“Senpai..... What do you think of violence?”

“Violence... huh.”

“Is it a good thing or a bad thing?”

If that’s the question of what you think of Hosen’s approach, the answer is one.

“If I had to choose from those two, it’s an advantageous thing.”

I told her that.

I thought that she would say something back soon, but it was silence that came back. When I turned only my eyes to Nanase and checked my expression, the quiet face had disappeared.

She had the same eyes as she did when she was looking at me when she left yesterday.

After a few seconds of waiting for Nanase’s reply.

“I also have the same opinion.”

The answer which does not feel the wave of feelings which can be taken as a truth and a lie has returned.

A strong will not to yield to violence was present in Nanase, and yet she stayed by his side?

No... Not necessarily.

At that time, Hosen was strongly responding to the word ‘that’ that Nanase spoke.

There is no guarantee that Hosen is necessarily stronger as a human being than Nanase.

I was curious about that, but I’m sure it’s not something to ask here and now.

She does not look like the type of person who’d say unnecessary things.

I shouldn’t be wary of Hosen yet.

Should I leave it at this now? There will be a chance to attack again with Horikita.

“In any case, if it’s Hosen that decides the class policy, this matter seems to be difficult.”

I started to think about contact with other classes while continuing my talk with Nanase.

“Well, it’s not a bad idea. Should we set up a meeting at once?”

She answered that because she had judged the proposed cooperative relationship as a good proposal.

“That’s a welcoming offer, but is it really good for you guys?”

“Yes. However, I don’t know how many people will cooperate with me, so I can’t make an absolute promise. At worst I may be alone, but do you mind?”

“It’s fine. I’ll leave it to you”

For the time being, it is important for me and Horikita to get more involved with the first-year Class D, even if by a little.

“Of course. I’m sure Horikita-senpai will be happy too.”

“By the way, is Horikita-senpai the leader of the second year Class D?”

“Ah. She’s the one leading the class.”

I decided to tell Horikita that it would be better to have a discussion with class D under the cooperation of Nanase. Speaking directly in the classroom would only make things worse by standing out too much.

“Ah...” I may not be able to reply to you soon. Is that Ok?”

“All right. I’ll try to make adjustments as soon as possible.”

“Yes.”

I agreed to exchange contacts with Nanase and get in touch with her later.

## 2

After confirming that Horikita had not yet arrived at the school, I decided to wait at the entrance for a little while.

If you talk about this in the classroom or the corridor, you’ll be worried about the public eye.

Horikita, who showed up soon after, looked at me strangely, not realizing that I was waiting for her.

“Good morning. You’re meeting someone?”

“It’s kind of like a meeting. The one I was waiting for has arrived.”

“Yes.”

She turned around lightly and turn around when she realized that there is no one I know., she looked back at me

“Me?”

“Ah. There’s something I want to talk about quickly.”

“If you have been waiting for me, I wonder if it is something important.”

We start walking together.

“Important... Let’s see. I think it’s going to be important. I had a chance to talk with Tsubasa Nanase of the D class for one year. So, I made a little suggestion over there.”

“Oh, what kind of proposal?”

“I tried to approach the one-year D class and the second-year D class to see if they could join hands.”

“You’ve done something that is completely unlike you.”

Horikita herself has wondering about ways to work together with the first-year Class D.

I was prepared for her to be angry because I made such a proposal without her permission.

“Have you seen the partner status of the first-year class D?”

“Oh, no one has decided on a partner yet. I’m sure that Sakayanagi will also have to hold on.”

It is a natural flow that the withdrawal concentrates on the honor student of the upper class who cooperate with a reasonable amount of points rather than pulling out with a lot of money.

“I’m sure that’s not all. It takes a certain amount of effort to deal with Hosen-kun’s sharp policy. It’s just more time to spend time in a higher class.”

“Maybe”

“Did you propose to Nanase-san after you found out how hard it was to face Hosen-kun? Or did you call out to be a secret cooperative through Nanase-san so that Hosen-kun wouldn’t be able to be know?”

“What do you think?”

I dared not answer it deeply and asked Horikita. If you no longer

have a plan to work with the first-year class D, you can only let it go.

“I’ve re-analyzed the situation of this special exam again; can you hear it?”

“I’m not sure I’ll be able to give you the right advice.”

“I’m not expecting anything.”

She just wants to share her thoughts.

This may have something to do with the first-year class D that I brought up today.

“When you first look at the whole first grade, it’s natural for the students with excellent academic ability to be popular.”

“That’s right. Nanase said that the second-year class A and the second-year class C are bringing up the contract story by the point system.”

“But the swans were all on hold for answers. We don’t know how many points we’ve come to terms with, but the half-million points we have presented to us are too expensive.”

Given that the top 5 groups are awarded 100,000 points and the top 30% are rewarded 10,000 points, even 200,000 points is overkill.

“I wonder how many points were offered by Hashimoto-kun?”

“Not sure, but it’s a good idea to think that it’s far from half a million.”

Unless you can find out from one of the negotiating parties, it’s an answer you’ll never know.

“I’m convinced that the points offered by class A and class C do not differ much. No, class A may have offered less.”

This reasoning is probably based on the updated OAA data from this morning.

Between second-year class A and class C, the one with greater number of decided pairs is class C.

“If it’s class A and class C, class A is naturally superior in terms of brand value. If there is no difference in the points, there are many people who will choose class A. What we can think of is that class A is trying to win over the first-years by their class value and private

points, while class C is trying to increase the amount of points as they lose by brand strength.”

I nod lightly to affirm.

“What’s a little strange is the way of thinking of Ryuuken-kun. In order to win, it is a minimum requirement to bring the top team to the side, but it is inevitable that it will be a fight against class A. If we play in a money game, there’s no chance of winning no matter how you think about it, and you’re going to have no chance to win the overall first place.”

He was going against class A, but it was a poor fight.

“Even if you drop the level a little, you should aim at the students who are not bad in academic ability.”

There are also many students with academic ability B and C+. It is safer to aim for second place overall.

“Well, it’s a mess to read his thoughts, but... I’ll move on. The remaining class B is trying to build a relationship of trust with the first-years by drawing them into their group regardless of academic ability as relief for the weak. Many of the students who have academic ability D or lower, excluding the first-year class D, are saved by Ichinosen-san.”

After looking back once and making sure that no one was eavesdropping, she continued:

“The aim now is the middle class of each class, the students in terms of academic ability B to C+.”

The students in that area will not be able to ask for a lot of money, and there are still a lot of students left.

It’s a good thing to talk to them while class A and class C are competing for the upper teams.

“Then, do you mean that the strategy focused on the first-year class D is withdrawn?”

“No, I’ll continue. Rather, should I say their value as partners has increased?”

“What do you think about throwing away the middle tier of another

class?”

It can be said that this judgment is too reckless. Our second-year class D is behind the other classes, so we are trying to get as many reliable partners as early as possible.

“It’s not that I’m not doing anything. It’s going to be a bit mean, but I’m going to make time by setting up a fake money game. Unlike honor students, the middle level children don’t think they’ll be offered a lot of points. I’m going to delude these middle level students. I think that we will be able to have a little bargaining afterwards.”

“Is it our goal to make Sakayanagi and the others use points not only for the upper layer, but also for the middle level students?”

“I don’t know how effective it will be, but I can attract some attention. And in the meantime, I’m going to cut into the first-year class D. So, I’m glad that you brought up the matter. I was just thinking of contacting Nanase-san.”

“But I’m afraid Hosen is looking for a point deal, isn’t he?”

“That’s true. But I wonder if he really wants only the points. When I got into the second-year area, he said to me: “If we don’t nominate our class, we won’t be able to form a decent pair. That’s why I’ll give you a hand to the stupid and incompetent.” It shows that his aim was our class D. If he was only after private points, he wouldn’t have said it like that.”

Horikita asserts that there should be room for negotiation other than the private points.

“The last thing Nanase said to him, ‘that,’ also made me suspicious.”

“That’s true. I’m sure that Hosen is paying attention to our class.”

Instead of throwing away the top spot in the overall rank, Horikita has set three propositions: don’t drop out, don’t participate in money games, and aim for third place or higher overall. It’s not easy, but that’s why we must work with first-year class D.

“That said, we can expect that Hosen-kun will be tricky. I have insurance.”

It seems that she has been doing other things that I don’t know of.

“I’m currently wondering if we can work with a part of the first-year Class B.”

“Speaking of first-year class B... You’re from the same junior high school as Kushida and Yagami.”

I remember that Kushida and Yagami had already decided to partner at the OAA this morning.

“Yesterday, Kushida and Yagami-kun joined hands. Unfortunately, I didn’t remember any of my juniors, but he could be the key. He seemed to have a lot of faith in Kushida. We’re already negotiating and hopefully we can gain a few more people.”

That’s good news, but it creates a point of concern.

“Are you acting with Kushida?”

There remain questions as to how serious Kushida, who dislikes Horikita, will cooperate with us.

“I think I understand well that it’s difficult right now. That’s why we’re talking about Hirata-kun in between.”

“I see. In that case, Kushida won’t be able to act half-heartedly.”

If Kushida brings together some students to negotiate with Yagami, our class will be able to solve some of the partner problems and concentrate on their studies.

### 3

“Good morning Horikita-san. Do you have some free time?”

During the break after the homeroom, Hirata moved to Horikita’s seat.

I look at the situation from my seat.

“Yesterday, I talked to a lot of people, but unfortunately they don’t cooperate easily. There was a student who told me that it was ok to team up.”

It seems that it did not go smoothly because it was the soccer club. And it’s hard to be completely friendly with a freshman who has just joined the club, even if it is Yosuke.



“Did the first-years ask for private points?”

Hirata affirmed, so Horikita continued.

“It’s not surprising since it is a chance to sell yourself high.”

As you can imagine, the problem of point acquisition has spread throughout the first-year.

“After being asked to be a partner in class A for the second year, he asked me to work with him because he would pay for points from class C for the second year. Not only that student, but almost all the students who were called to class A came from class C.”

“Smart students have a high rate of competition, so it’s natural.”

Horikita had already predicted that.

However, the next thing Hirata said was different.

“That’s why some of the students whose academic ability of C and D seem to have been called out. I’ve also heard people offering them a lot of points.”

“In other words, they’re not necessarily inviting students with high academic ability as a priority, are they?”

“As far as I’m aware of.”

“Yes, can I ask you for the name of the student?”

“Of course.”

Hirata tells Horikita the name of a first-year who has been found to be solicited by Class A. When Horikita examines it, she soon understands.

The students who were called out were students who had excellent characteristics even if their academic ability was low. His physical ability is high, his ability to think quickly and his dedication to social contribution have been evaluated.

“I see ... I guess it’s true ...”

“Perhaps they are looking at the long-term benefits instead of just this special exam.”

This is not the only special exam to cooperate with first-year students. Of course, if that happens, you will need skills other than academic ability. The idea is to save students who are concerned about

their academic ability and make them useful in their areas of expertise later on. There's no doubt in that direction.

What's interesting, however, is that class C led by Ryuen is even following that.

Rather than aiming only for students with high academic ability, they are exactly following Sakayanagi.

"I wish we could do the same..."

"It would be difficult."

We are in Class D. And Sakayanagi is in Class A.

Students who have just entered the school already know which brand is better.

If you think about the future, it's natural to be biased towards a good class if you want to get help...

"Thank you. Can you continue to talk to the first-year students?"

"Yes. I'll report it again if I find anything."

Hirata sent a refreshing smile to Horikita and returned to his seat.

Soon after, Horikita turned to talk to me...

"That's what it is."

I see, she seems to have noticed that I was eavesdropping.

"Hirata-kun is really reliable."

"I guess."

He was once against Horikita, but that has been resolved now.

His presence will be useful for the class.

Communication skills and intelligence are, of course, weapons for Hirata, but the greatest strength is trust.

He has enough achievements to prove his trustworthiness.

That's why Horikita can also discuss the strategy without hesitation.

"Being in Class D is a handicap in itself. It's a tough fight."

"You still have to do it, hang in there."

"I'm going to have you play a part."

"It's about the matter of Nanase, isn't it?"

"Yes. May I ask for an answer at once? I can go there at any time."

This should move quickly, as hitting while the iron is hot is a good

idea.

Otherwise, other classes will have more and more talented people.

“But it’s after tomorrow. The first step is to get rid of that problem.”

“Of course, I know.”

## 4

There was no response from Nanase even after school ended.

Even if I got a reply, Horikita and I wouldn’t be able to move today.

There is a recent problem that needs to be dealt with immediately.

It is the promise for cooking for Amasawa that was suddenly made.

It is a beautiful story that if you get a passing score, you can get her to partner with Sudou, but the hurdles are not low.

Ten minutes before the appointed time, I arrived at the entrance to Keyaki mall, and It seemed that Amasawa had not arrived yet. Instead of using my mobile, I watched the students going to the mall. From the first grade to the third grade, the students swarmed into the mall while chatting. It seems to be warmer than usual this morning, but the evening is getting closer and the temperature getting colder. The temperature is likely to drop a little more toward the night.

Amasawa showed up just before the appointed time.

“It’s perfect, Ayanokouji-senpai”

As soon as she arrived, she nodded and smile several times as if she was satisfied with something.

“What are you talking about?”

“You were at the meeting place before the girl and weren’t doing anything unnecessary.”

I noticed that she was unexpectedly observant of trivial things.

The unnecessary means that you were probably not messing around with your cell phone or making a phone call.

From now on, it’s like a challenge from Amasawa, that is, cooking, but if you think about it, you can look at various recipes to the last minute and set up measures. In short, on the day of the written

examination, is it easy to understand if you say that you are staring at the textbook just before the bell rings? Of course, it does not violate the rules that Amasawa demands.

However, it is thought that it is reflected as a person who does not have confidence in cooking.

Even on the phone. You may be perceived as having that kind of conversation with someone. That's why I dared not to do anything unnecessary.

I intended to plant them unconsciously in Amasawa, but instead I was spotted at the first stage.

“Well then, let's go, Ayanokouji-senpai.”

As soon as we met up, Amasawa said so and immediately went to Keyaki mall.

“Would you like to buy some ingredients?”

“Yes. There's that, too. I must buy something for my senpai to make. Do you have any money?”

“Somewhat.”

It's really just that way.

I won't say something unnecessary to my junior.

“Good, then I won't hesitate. Well, I heard from my classmate that they sell a lot of things we need. I wonder where the shopping basket is.”

Amasawa didn't go straight to the supermarket and instead steps into a convenience store which specializes in daily necessities. We found a blue shopping cart near the entrance.

What bothers me is that she said, There's that, too.’

What we're going to do is cooking, but is there anything else you need to do other than buying ingredients?

Amasawa stops at a corner full of kitchenware.

Looking back, when I first entered the school, I went through several times and bought what I needed here.

In addition to the students and teachers, adults working in the cafeteria also use a lot of this kind of item. Kitchen utensils have a

special large corner, I remember that I could not immediately figure out what was what when I first came.

While I haven't come for a while, it seems that a lot of new products have been added.

The fact that Amasawa dropped in here meant that she was going to buy some specialty equipment. There are countless peelers, graters, mortars, and utensils. Of course, there are some that I do not have. What's weird, though, is that I don't get any confirmation of coming here. It's normal to talk about what you have and what you don't. If you think about the loss of time, you can confirm enough while walking ...

I am satisfied with the feelings I want to confirm and let Amasawa lead.

I decided to talk about something unrelated to cooking utensils...

"Don't you cook for yourself?"

"Me?" Not at all. I'm not the type that's good at cooking. I'd rather be fed than feed others."

While talking, we reached the destination as Amasawa stopped and looked around for what she was trying to find.

The flow until I came here was very smooth, and when I took my eyes off, I faced the product shelf.

For a few seconds, I think about whether I'm worried about something and fold my arms.

Then, once she made the decision, she nodded once and muttered.

"First of all, it's a cutting board, and a kitchen knife. Then there's a bowl and a whisk, and a pot and a ladle."

While saying such things, she throws them in the basket one after another.

The last thing thrown in the cart was the ladle.

"Wait a minute. I don't have some of them, but the others are in my room."

I'm going to tell her so in a hurry because I had a premonition that I might have.

“It’s okay. I’ll just buy it for my own use., you’ll only be buying them”

Just buy them for her...? Even the cutting board is better than the one I’m using in my room right now. It seems to be made of Hinoki Cypress wood and costs a bit more than 4000 points. All the other tools are also high-end. From there, she grabs another item, then we start moving, and then we go to the next shelf. There, she didn’t even hesitate and picked up a fruit knife.

“If you say that you are a good cook, you definitely need a good knife.”

She threw it into the basket while saying that in a light tone. I’m an amateur who didn’t even know that there was a specific knife for cutting fruit. By the way, it is the fruit knife, but the price is high, nearly 3000 points. Next to this knife, you can see that several cheaper ones are also sold. The only difference in price is whether it’s made in Japan or not. This also seems to be a luxurious choice.

If you’re a cook, it seems to be normal to use this kind of small kitchen knife.

“I’d like to ask you, but the payment...”

“Of course, I’m sure that you will pay, Ayanokouji-senpai.”

I knew that, but the total amount is lightly over 15000 points. When this happens, it might be better to throw away the cheap things I am using now. If you think you can use high-quality equipment when you cook by yourself in the future, somehow.

“Oh, as I said earlier, it’s only for me, so don’t use it every day and wear it out, ok?”

“Cheeky Devil.”

As I gave this remark, she looked disgusted.

“Do you want to call it quits?”

She held the edge of the shopping cart and said such a provoking thing.

It’s good that I can’t refuse because I’m holding the weakness here, she has the upper hand.

If we want to get a student with academic ability A and save Sudou, there's no other choice but to do this. If the point expense is too great, it is possible to divide it.

"No, I understand. I'm going to pay, so don't hesitate to buy what you like."

"Do you think I'm a bad woman?"

"No, that's not true."

Amasawa looked into my eyes for a moment before laughing.

"That's good, senpai."

I'll have to buy all the pots, ladles, and so on.

All of them have the terrible label of 'Amasawa's use only.'

## 5

After that, I went to the supermarket to buy the main ingredients.

As a result, the private point expenditure reached about 20,000. Of course, it is the first time that I bought such a large amount, and the weight of the plastic bags I held in both hands was biting into my fingers.

It is not possible to narrow down everything Amasawa thinks about and what to make from ingredients. This is because we were buying vegetables, meat, fruits, and even buns.

But there are some dishes you can imagine. A typical example is nampura and chili pepper stew.

However, if you're going to use all the ingredients, it's still fine, but it's possible that you're harassing and mixing fakes. When I saw Amasawa's actions today, I couldn't help doubting it. One may think that it is practically impossible to narrow it down at this stage.

"All right, this is perfect. Why don't we go to your room, senpai?"

It's as if she's coming to her boyfriend's room to play, but there's no way she'll have any shards of that feeling. If Amasawa is not satisfied with the dish, this deal would be broken. It's an abstract task to make a delicious dish.

If this is an exam that you don't intend to pass from the beginning, you're just wasting your points and time. But now we have no choice but to accept this development in a quiet way.

From the judgment of Horikita, it would be heavy and troublesome if we failed here.

I didn't negotiate with the material cost, but I'd like to discuss the cost with Horikita and Sudou later.

And so, I push this matter of points away for the time being.

I decided to ask the question that I wanted to ask Amasawa to accept this situation as obediently as possible.

"In the first place, it's strange that you want a strange man to cook rice and eat it. You usually have a strong sense of resistance, don't you?"

It's my own way of thinking, but I usually feel a strong resistance.

Meals are not seen but carried into the mouth and poured into the stomach.

I'm worried about who makes it and how it is made, not only about taste but also about hygiene.

It is natural to get to know the other person, which creates a relationship of trust and gradually decreases the sense of resistance.

"Is that so? Isn't it like eating at a restaurant? A stranger cooking in the kitchen, so you don't know what's going on behind the scenes."

Certainly, we don't know how it is made specifically even if it is the cafeteria of the school.

However, it is only the same on the surface, and it is actually very different.

"Even if you hold one rice ball, hygiene management is thoroughly maintained. Isn't it completely different?"

"Is that right?" Rather, I think that it is good to be able to see various environments where you can see the food being cooked. You can see the facial expressions and movements of the person. I know that's why you care about hygiene. On the other hand, depending on the shop, there is a place where you can't see the kitchen at all, right? There are



some unsanitary shops that are super dirty and insect-like.”

Amasawa develops a theory that if you can see the food being cooked, it’s ok even if it is cooked by a stranger.

“And I think I somehow understood how this school works. If the point goes to zero, you’ll have to live a simple life, right? But if your senpais cook for you, you don’t have to worry about it”

I see. In other words, if the food tastes delicious this time, it’s not going to end with just this once.

The aim is to secure a place to eat in an emergency.

It’s a good opportunity for me to improve my cooking, but will you pay for the ingredients?

“Is it obvious? My way of thinking.”

“Somehow”

Amasawa laughed while showing her white teeth.

However, the question remains whether it is best to ask a second-year boy. I think it would be easier to ask a better classmate or a member of the same sex.

Well, I’m not dissatisfied because I’m trying to get the benefit of that.

“But if you’re so picky about the taste. If I don’t make something delicious, this won’t work, right?”

“I know. Cooking is not the goal.”

It’s not a low hurdle in that respect, but you must do everything you can.

What becomes important here is the cooking instructions from Horikita, which I was taught overnight.

How much can I make the use of what I learnt in a few hours yesterday after we received a proposal from Amasawa?

However, it will not be easy to mislead Amasawa with poor cooking.

The ability to test your skills can be seen strongly from the materials.

I arrived in front of the dormitory room.

Amasawa put her hands over her eyebrows and looked up at the dormitory, avoiding the sun.

“I’m a little nervous about going to the second-year dormitory.”

Amasawa says such a thing, but she doesn’t seem very nervous.

Rather, she seemed to be enjoying the feeling of playing around normally.

“Oh, but cooking is exactly the same.”

Then I looked at the exterior and looked around the lobby and thought about Amasawa.

“That’s right.”

I’m not afraid to say it, but I’ve never been to the dormitory with another student in a different grade.

When I pass a student from another class, I get a little gaze.

It is natural that the second-year student brings a first-year girl (and carries ingredients).

Amasawa waved at the student but I wanted her to stop it as it made us stand out.

I hurried into my room with Amasawa before a strange rumor would start to form.

“Pardon the intrusion. Oh, it’s so neat and clean.”

“I just rushed to clean it last night because I knew I was going to invite my kouhai.”

Don’t let it seem like you’ve studied cooking in the middle of the night.

Well—the steps from here are extremely important.

Once you put a bag with ingredients and kitchen utensils on the floor in front of the kitchen, you start with the process of boiling water in an electric kettle. We head to the living room together and prompted Amasawa to sit down.

You can sit in a position where you can’t see the kitchen, but I don’t dare to say that.

If you look at it, it is important to let the appearance of this place be positioned so that it can be seen from the side.

“I’ll make coffee. You can watch TV if you want to in the meantime.”

“Thank you, senpai.”

Then, in a few minutes, I brewed coffee in boiling water and told her to wait.

Amasawa picks up the remote control from the table and turned on the appropriate channel.

It’s not absolute, but there’s a good reason for me to make a sound.

It was correct to guide her to watch TV and keep the remote control nearby.

Then she immediately heads to the kitchen to appeal to the movement. If you try to cook while having someone watch by your side poorly, you must stop it, but as expected it does not seem to do so.

“Oh, it’s a foul to look up on your cell phone, ok?”

While hearing this, I expected that to happen.

“It’s tough. I use my phone most of the time when I’m cooking.”

“You’re not confident in your cooking?”

“That’s not it.”

“I hope so. People who can cook are people who have recipes in their heads, at least that is how I think of them.”

It has not been explained at yesterday’s stage, but obediently obeying her was the only option.

That degree of demand is already in my calculation.

“Then, leave your cell phone on the bed.”

I inserted the charging cord into my cell phone and put it on the bed.

Amasawa nodded and picked up her cup of coffee.

“I want to start right away before it’s late, what dish would you like for me to cook?”

“Then I’ll announce it. The dish that my senpai has to cook is Tomuyamukun!”

[ TLN: (Tomuyamukun) or ‘Tom yum goong’ refers to a famous Thai soup that has a pungent and sour taste, with a distinctively

complex aroma. From here on, it will be referred to as “Tom Yamkung”]

“Tom Yamkung...” I don’t know about this dish.

It seems that the nampura and chili peppers, which seem to be indispensable for Thai cuisine, were for this purpose.

“Can you make it? Please, Senpai.”

“Tom Yamkung” is a dish for the test that was given by Amasawa. Of course, I’ve never made it.

In the first place, I can hardly think it, and I have never eaten it.

This kind of food was never served in the white room.

It is the knowledge of the degree that I have seen on television as much as being popular among women.

If it were to be made only by the ability from here, it would not be completed properly.

Not only do I not know the specific material, but I have no idea what the procedure is.

So, what on earth was I doing last night with overnight practice?

I was not trying to memorize a lot of recipes of traditional and east-west dishes.

And I was not mastering royal cuisines.

It’s quite nonsense to take the time to remember a recipe, even though it could allow you to see the recipe.

After deciding to cook, Horikita taught me two things.

The first thing is the basic technique of using a basic kitchen knife. Sliced, shredded, chopped or diced.

I took the time to practice the part where I could clearly understand the skill.

Still, of course, I can’t show off these professional skills.

Unfortunately, it is a level that I am not ashamed to say that I am good at cooking as a general person.

It is impossible for ordinary people to master it in half a day, but they were confident in the speed of their skill acquisition.

With at least a few times a week, the basic human skill to cook

could have reached that area of expertise by now.

It's a result that has occurred because I didn't spend even a second on how to make this certain dish.

However, if that happens, you will not know how to make the problem dishes that were naturally served.

Then, it is the time for the second trick to be prepared. How using your mobile phone to check recipes in real time. But Amasawa did not allow me to use my phone, and my cell phone is being held hostage in bed.

Even if I had prepared something like a tablet hidden around, I wouldn't have had a chance to see it.

In fact, Amasawa occasionally looks at me for surveillance. All of them are on the calculation. From Amasawa, take out the one less than two centimeters from the right pocket which becomes the blind spot.

At first glance, it looks like an earplug, and it is put in the ear hole on the right side which cannot be seen by Amasawa.

And then, I coughed a little as a signal.

Then, then-

"I could hear the content of the story. I never thought you'd have to make Tom Yamkung."

Horikita's voice can be heard from a small wireless earphone that fits into my right ear.

It is a strategy to listen to cooking methods in real time through Horikita, who is in a situation where she can operate a computer freely in her own room. The bag I put at my feet was with Sudou's cell phone. And this wireless earphone transmits voice from Sudou's mobile phone. I used this to call Horikita before I went shopping to test out.

While shopping at Keyaki mall, Horikita came home and was in perfect condition.

This wireless earphone was bought yesterday, too.

By any chance, if Amasawa shows up in the kitchen, I can put the wireless earphones in my pocket while shaking my head. The reason why the other side is monitoring here is that it is in the state to be able

to monitor the other side, too.

Now I can cook without having to worry about recipes. I've decided on a few cues if the explanation of Horikita's procedure is too early, or when I want to hear the explanation again.

However, the cooperation with Horikita becomes extremely important from here.

Even if I know the materials and instruments I use, I don't have any visual information.

The reason is that it is necessary to make the dish named Tom Yamkung which has good taste.

It is important to be able to give specific instructions and reproduce them only by talking about something.

"By the way, there is something I want you to check with Amasawa first."

I change the question from Horikita which is transmitted through earphones into words and convey it.

"Amasawa. You don't need a whisk for Tom Yamkung, and you don't have to use a fruit knife. If there's anything else you'd like me to make besides Tom Yamkung, I'd like to ask you now."

If you are served additional dishes later, it will be troublesome, so ask them to go ahead as instructed.

"I was going to ask you later, but I thought I'd have the apple peeled off."

It seems that Amasawa was going to place an additional order later, as she was in this place.

"The leftover ingredients are very good for my senpais. The tools I don't use are to be used the next time I come to see them again."

The fruit knife, which was suspected to be used, had its own use, but some of it was in the storehouse for a while.

"I was right to confirm. I taught you how to use a fruit knife yesterday, so you can do it, right?"

I don't know how far the technique learnt overnight will work, but it will probably be all right.

“The cooking time is between 15 and 30 minutes, which is good.”  
Well- how well can I make it?

## 6

My Tom Yamkung, which had passed the scheduled time by a little, seemed to look well, as I was able to make it roughly according to the instructions.

The time has come to serve the finished homemade dish to Amasawa.

I only met with her recently, yet here I am, serving my cooking to women.

I laced Tom Yamkung on the table and immediately returned the apple.

I'll need to show my knife skills Infront of Amasawa.

“I usually peel it with a kitchen knife, so on the other hand, there may be some things I'm not used to.”

It tried to peel the apple once by making such a statement.

“Wow, it's amazing. It's all done. It's a pass for a kitchen knife.”

It's not like you're a professional loser, but at least you don't have to see the kind of misery you'll ever touch for the first time.

Then I arranged the finished apples.

“By the way, when it comes to Tom Yamkung, you have an image of Pakchi, but don't you like it?”

Pakchi was not included in the ingredients I bought today.

“It's not like I don't like it. But I thought that if I bought pakchi, you'll find out about Tom Yamkung.”

It seems to have decided to pull out Pakchi out of alertness. It seems that she was still paying some tricks. It is understandable that it is because it does not show the gap here, but it is a very luxurious story.

“Can I start cleaning up first?”

I ask her as I returned the petty knife and board that I used to cut the apple to the kitchen.

“No good. Just sit here and wait for the judge’s decision.”

Saying that, I’m demanded that I sit right in front of her.

I couldn’t go against it, so I followed the instructions and gave up on cleaning up, and then I went from the kitchen to the living room again.

“Then I’ll have it.”

She slowly brought the hot Tom Yamkung to her mouth.

Even if she is being watched as she eats, there seems to be no resistance at all.

I’m the same as Amasawa, and I’m a person who doesn’t resist that area.

After that, Amasawa, who had finished eating slowly, put her hands together as if satisfied.

“It felt like a feast.”

She seems to have eaten up beautifully, and the food seems to have met her tastes.

Well..... I tasted it, but I don’t know if it tasted right.

I don’t think there’s any problem because there are no mistakes in the amount.

Still, if Amasawa says that she is not convinced, then this battle is over.

It ends in the form of defeat here.

“My senpai’s Tom Yamkung-”

The judgment from Amasawa who gave a little time goes down.

“Yeah, it was a reasonable. It wasn’t special, but it was good enough to eat again.”

Whether it passes or rejects, we don’t immediately touch on the parts we care about.

“For now, I’ll put these away.”

Amasawa says that and heads to the kitchen with her bowl and spoon from the meal in her hand.

She didn’t just put away the dishes but started to clean up the dishes in earnest.



“I’ll do the cleaning.”

“I’m okay. I forced you to make it so let me do this. I’m going to do it. Senpai should sit down and relax. I’m better at cleaning than cooking because I’ve been offering payment to my mother by cleaning up after meals.”

“Then I’ll take your word for it. By the way, it’s about the result, but what about it?”

Amasawa remains silent for a while as she is cleaning up.

Only the sound of the evening news coming from the television echoes indoors.

“That’s right. I have to announce it soon.”

While voicing her thoughts, Amasawa did not like the position of the ribbon on the right side of her hair, using the reflection of her mobile phone like a mirror, she began to remove it and put it back on.

Soon after the re-attachment of the ribbon was over, Amasawa gave a general comment.

“I said a little while ago, but it was fine. It wasn’t bad.”

“So, it’s a pass or a fail?”

“I’m very picky about cooking.”

While saying that, Amasawa laughed when she saw me once.

“Whether I come here to eat again will depend on my senpai’s efforts”

It was not a level that I wanted to go up frequently and ask to make food.

Is this severe, as I have described as a second-rated point?

“Then, what about the matter of Sudou?”

I was a little hesitant to step here, but I decided to ask.

“I can’t say that you passed the exam, but it was true that you could cook. I must thank you for the amount that I made you spend since a lot of expensive things and ate it for free. This time, I’ll work with Sudou-senpai, in return for my senpai’s efforts.”

It seems that It was not a satisfactory result, but for the time being, Amasawa seems to have admitted it as a minimum.

Those were some good news, as I was beginning to think whether we failed or not. I patted my chest as I felt relieved.

“I’ll be done cleaning up almost, so wait a little while.”

I couldn’t stand and keep staring at the sight of her working to clean up, so I decided to wait while watching the news coming from the TV.

Amasawa came back soon after the clean-up was finished. After that, she immediately showed me the screen of her mobile phone and applied as a partner to Sudou. If Sudou corresponds to the request today, the contract is surely established.

“Sudou is in the club, so I’ll have him approve it later. Ok?”

Of course, it’s true that I actually have Sudou’s cell phone, but I can’t use it right now in front of Amasawa.

“It’s okay. Well then, it’ll be bad if I’m late, so I’ll head back now. See you later, Ayanokouji-senpai”

The development progressed rapidly, and Amasawa went to the entrance to return.

“Amasawa. Thank you for partnering with Sudou. Horikita, and I were also helped thanks to you.”

“It’s OK, you don’t need to thank me so much, right?”

While putting on her shoes, Amasawa returns her words with a light feeling.

“There’s something I’d like to ask you about.”

As I tried to convey the contents, Amasawa looked back as she finished putting on her shoes.

“Would you like me to act as an intermediary with class A?”

I’m not talking about class A, but all the students with academic ability A.

Basically, the rotation of the head is not lost in the content to speak fast.

“That’s right. There are a lot of students who are having trouble finding a partner like Sudou do in class D. It would be helpful if you could introduce me to students who would help us.”

“Sorry, I can’t do that.”

She lightly put her hands together and apologized. My request bounced off from Amasawa.

“Oh, isn’t it bad for Ayanokouji-senpai to move without asking Horikita-senpai? I’m starting to think I can trust you. But I don’t get along very well with my classmates. When I met my senpais yesterday, I was alone, right?”

“That’s right.”

At that time, while many students went to Keyaki mall with their friends but Amasawa was alone.

“I say what I want to say, and I don’t have any delicacy when doing so. It’s hard to make friends with that kind of personality. So, I can’t help you, I’m sorry.”

“No, I’m satisfied enough with just having you team up with Sudou. If you have any trouble, please rely on me. There might be something I can do to help.”

“Thank you very much. Well then, I’ll see you later, senpai.”

I failed to get involved with class A, but for now I’ll say this is enough.

“Somehow, we managed to do it, huh?”

I cut off Sudou’s cell phone call and called Horikita’s cell phone from my own.

“Thank you very much. It seems to have worked out somehow.”

As soon as I answered the phone, the words earned from the fruits of our labor were spoken by Horikita.

“I felt like I was saved by Amasawa’s gentle judgment.”

“Even so, this solved Sudou-kun’s problem. It’s a huge achievement.”

It was bad to use a method like this to fool Amasawa, but this saved us.

All that’s left is to accept the partner application on time and return Sudou’s phone.

It’s about time for him to come.

“Why did you ask Amasawa to act as a bridge for her class? Aside

from her personality and the number of friends, you could imagine that our class would have difficulties negotiating with them, right?”

Horikita did not say that she would contact the first-year class A for this special exam.

The reason is simply that it is difficult to build a cooperative relationship.

“In a way, it’s a good thing. It’s true that our second-year class D is struggling to find partners, and it’s not unnatural to put that in words.”

If you don’t have anything to do, you’re going to talk with a feeling of regret or doubt.

Not having that idea is probably because they are pushing another strategy along with the one that Horikita is pushing as well.

“In other words, ... We gave up the capture of the entire first-year class A since the beginning, aimed only at cooperating with first-year class B and D, so didn’t we want to realize that?”

In fact, Horikita had the two classes in mind, so we didn’t even consider the capture of Class A using Amasawa.

It was decided from the beginning that it was good to be able to combine that with the strategy of finding strong partners for Sudou and the others.

“We don’t know what Amasawa is like, because we don’t know much about the first years aside from what we know from the OAA app, and we won’t know for some time. It may be difficult to carry over”

Horikita, who was listening to me the entire time, fell silent for a while.

“What’s the matter?”

“Your way of thinking is... Well, things are very calculated and smart isn’t it?”

“It’s not a big deal, is it?”

“No, it’s a big deal. Even if you don’t think so, it is a different story whether the idea that you had time to think about first. I think I understand a little why my brother was paying attention to you. But

until recently, you would not have told me such a specific thing. Why?"

A question from Horikita who was concerned about the action that can be taken even if it changes the mind.

"I don't have any other intentions. Next is the question of the students who remain, so I'll tell you when I hear from Nanase."

"Yes, that's right. I'll be waiting for you."

After the call with Horikita, I checked the situation in the kitchen.

The kitchen was spotless. Not only did she finish the washing, but the sink was also carefully polished, and it was cleaner than when I came to this room a year ago. The cutting boards, plates, kitchen knives, fruit knives, pots and ladles were also neatly stored. It was rather unexpected.

Although it was a Horikita-led proposal, it was the first close contact with a freshman we've done. If Amasawa is a white room student, it wouldn't be strange if she had set something up, but there was no sign of it.

Although I was very cautious...

He had knowledge as a matter of course as a high school student, including words and actions.

Having just left the White Room, it would be difficult to take a tense attitude like Amasawa's.

"Above all, Amasawa has paired up with Sudou, and the suspicion of being a white room student was gone, wasn't it?"

That's what happens if you're judging by the information you have now, including other first-year students who already have a partner. No, is it urgent for anyone to give such an answer?

It seems that partnering with me is the shortest ticket to drop out, but that doesn't mean that strategy is one of them. There is a possibility that another chance could've been looked upon, but he wouldn't dare to miss a big bait like that.

Knowledge gained as a high school student that cannot be acquired overnight is also a different story if there is time.

And it was not that I was not bothered by Amasawa's behavior and

movement.

I may not need to worry about it, but it's better to crush all the causes for concern.

Nothing is limited to Amasawa. It is also the case with Hosen and Nanase, who are expected to come into contact in the future. Among all the second-years, the person they looked at first was me.

Students who are close in contact should be suspected, whether there was a conversation with them.

From here on, we're going into dangerous areas to find potential partners.

And at this night, I received a message from Nanase.

"I can meet you after school tomorrow."

## 7

On the same day when Ayanokouji was preparing a dish for Amasawa.

At the Keyaki Mall café, second-year class A students Sakayanagi, Kamuro, and Hashimoto gathered to talk.

"Furthermore, it seems that there was an invitation from class C to the student we were talking to. Moreover, it seems they proposed to give 10,000 points unconditionally if they reject the invitation of class A."

Kamuro, which was contacted by Hashimoto on her mobile phone, reports to Sakayanagi.

"I'm not stupid to give out 10,000 just because someone decides to not partner with us."

Kamuro relayed further information from Hashimoto.

"If you join the second-year class C, 100,000 points will be given in advance. After confirming that the combined score of the pair is greater than 501, additional 100,000 points will be provided, making it 200,000 points in total."

"Huh. It seems that Ryuen-kun is trying to compete with me with all his heart."

“What are you going to do? Will you respond by offering points to the first-year students?”

“If we’re in a financial game, we won’t lose. But don’t you think it’s a lack of skill to win with the same strategy?”

“It’s not about the trick... Shouldn’t we give 100,000 or 200,000 if we need it? It’s obvious that even first-year students know the benefits of getting points.”

The story has already spread as an examination in which first-year students are in an advantageous position, and the honor students are being obtained as partners by offering them points.

Sakayanagi smiled and did not agree with Kamuro who advised her.

“Can I lose to Ryuen?”

“In our class and Ryuen-kun’s, there is a huge gap in academic achievement in the first place. In order to surpass it with the help of the first-years, he must pull out a considerable number of talented first-year students. His victory is not absolute.”

“Maybe so. But it’s not like we can always win, right?”

“That’s right. Although even if Ryuen has gathered enough students with academic achievement A, I wonder if it’s finally going to be an even match with us.”

However, it is possible to lose once or twice if it turns the other side.

Kamuro doesn’t raise the amount of heat that makes him want to win.

The reason is that it did not think that Sakayanagi who sits in front of her does not do anything as it is.

“What do you think would happen if we were to pay the same amount?”

“What’s going to happen, isn’t it that Ryuen will pay even more?”

“That’s right. It will be increased to 200,000 or 300,000 points.”

“But I can make sure that smart students join us.”

“The price we lose for that is a significant amount of points. You don’t have to risk losing millions of points. Don’t you think so?”

“Even if the amount presented by us here is less, can we win over

the first-year students?? I don't think first-year students deeply understand the value of class A."

Despite the worries of Kamuro, Sakayanagi showed no signs of joining a financial battle.

"I understood that Ryuuen-kun was going to take first place in the overall class. He seems to have changed his policy completely from last year when he made that point contract with Katsuragi-kun."

"He was planning to save 20 million and win, wasn't he?"

"There must have been a big change in his mind. Did he realize the importance of class points? No, should I say he wants to win with the class?"

Sakayanagi and Ryuuen have never had a face to face confrontation in a special exam.

However, it seemed as if they were talking to each other and hitting each other with strategies.

"So... It's okay, isn't it? I don't have to present my private points."

"Kamuro. Did I ever say that you will not have to present private points?"

"Eh...? But didn't you say a while ago that it was boring to fight with the same strategy?"

"Tell the first-year students that I'm ready to prepare the same amount of points as Ryuuen-kun."

On this mysterious command from Sakayanagi, Kamuro tightly presses her lips."

"However, even if the first-year students are convinced, don't sign a partner contract."

"What? I don't really know what that means."

"Fufufu. Oh Ryuuen-kun, your strategy is rather convenient for me."

"To me, what is it..."

"Isn't it good? The Princess's idea is interesting."

Hashimoto, who was listening to the conversation between the two over the phone, says it with interest.

"...Whatever."



Sakayanagi 's instruction was that even if the first-year students agree with the amount of points, the partner is not to be decided...

While Kamuro does not understand, Sakayanagi tells Hashimoto her intentions again.

Afterwards, Sakayanagi, who was staring at such at Kamuro as if they were lovers, seemed to reflect a little on the fact that she was too mean.

She started explaining to give her a hint.

"Ryuuen-kun's big acquisition strategy is not a bad thing in itself. By doing so he succeeded in forcing me to participate in the money game. However, the strategy to keep aiming at the same students as much as possible is a clear blunder. Class C are inferior in overall strength, and as such should first only aim at students with high academic ability in the future."

However, Ryuuen does not do it, and tries to reach out to the student with non-academic skills, which class A will need in the future.

"Does he mean he's saving a lot of private points?"

"Well, what about that? Even if you have the points, the amount that can actually be moved may not be so much?"

"No, it's funny. Don't you think you can propose acquisitions one after another because there are points?"

"If you just make suggestions, you can do it penniless. All you have to do is pretend that you have something on hand."

Kamuro couldn't immediately understand what benefit Ryuuen would get from doing that.

"If it were not for Ryuuen-kun, we could attract many talented first-year students by using only the class A brand. However, by bringing in the acquisition, we have also strengthened the money game. And what to do next? It's about fishing your forehead and letting us use a huge amount of points for class A as much as we can."

"That's right... I see."

As a result, even if class A students can be hired, it would be better for a second-year fighter to pay 200,000 private points instead of

100,000 and 300,000 private points instead of 200,000.

“But aren’t we at a disadvantage at the moment?” His pull-out strategy is successful one after another.”

“We’re not in a hurry. Only a few people were acquired by Ryuuen-kun. I must give him some leeway. There are just a few things he makes mistakes of. With the brand power of class A, he thinks that what we have is temporary, and that it can be destroyed if they make us lose and as such, is made to fail. And he’s mistaken that if you give money, you can have as many collaborators as you want.”

“I’m not sure, but I just need to follow your instructions, right?”

“Yes. That’s enough for now.”

“I don’t like it, but I feel like we’re being involved in Ryuuen’s strategy. What will happen if we get stuck in this way?”

“Rest assured, it won’t. I will win this game without any problems.”

Again, Kamuro can’t keep up with the answer of Sakayanagi, which she can’t understand, and sighs.

“It doesn’t make sense to turn your head full at this stage, so don’t be swayed by Ryuuen-kun. This special examination is not a battle to the last. We are looking into each other’s stomachs while we are trying to control each other.”

“It’s about giving up on trying to understand.”

“But... I don’t want it to be settled easily. It won’t be fun if that were to happen.”

Sakayanagi looked out the window and prayed that the enemy coming to her was a worthy opponent.

## 8

On the same day that the conversation between Sakayanagi, Kamuro, and Hashimoto, two hours later.

Ryuuen was in one of the karaoke rooms with Ishizaki and Ibuki.

“It looks like a first-year class B student who has been persuaded at 200,000 asked for points, Ryuuen-san.”

Ishizaki, who received instructions on his cell phone, reports to Ryuen.

“Why? He wasn’t satisfied with 200,000 points?”

“No, it seems that Sakayanagi said she would give the same amount of points.”

“They don’t want to lose to us either. Can we keep playing this game and win? We are at a disadvantage.”

“I think class A has quite a lot of private points. We are really at a disadvantage.”

Even after receiving such a report, Ryuen does not seem to panic, but only plays with his mobile phone.

“Ryu... Ryuen-san?”

“Calm down. I know what to do.”

As Ryuen looks at the empty glass, Ishizaki hurries to pour water in it.

“Say you’re going to pay 100,000 in advance and 200,000 after the exam.”

“Well, seriously?”

300,000 in total. A larger amount of points will be spent.

“Anyway, I couldn’t do much for the rest of the first-years. I’m looking forward to the addition of Sakayanagi.”

“It’s not that we’re waiting for our self-destruction at the end.”

If the funds are short, there is nothing we can do about it.

“It’s impossible to compete with Sakayanagi after all... It’s better to aim for the second place here.”

“I think so, too. If they were to offer the same amount, we would lose by the brand value.”

Ryuen laughs after hearing the analysis of Ishizaki and Ibuki.

“Ha. I’m sure Sakayanagi already has a triumphing face.”

“You just know how to do it. Even if you get a good game with private points, there’s a difference between brands.”

“The class A brand is just a decoration for the time being. The more people who are trusting the brand, the more trust they lose when the

collapse eventually occurs.”

“Even so, what about the points?” If it increases to 300,000, it’s not very good, we can’t pay everyone.”

“You don’t have to pay. I’m not going to team up this time with a guy who requests points without knowing the ceiling.”

“..... What?”

“That’s not what I’m trying to do this time. I’m just researching what kind of people are in this year. The guy who cooperates with the money is the one who can always be made an ally by offering money. The only way to defeat class A is to keep increasing the points.”

“Then you’re just working to see if he’s falling with a lot of money?”

“It was obvious from the beginning that we could catch points. But there’s a student who’s already partnered with our class. Why do you think they chose to work with class C?”

“Eh... Now that you mention it, why?”

The first points presented were 50,000 in advance and 50,000 after the exam.

Some were already working with Class C, even though it wasn’t too expensive.

“You always see each other one-on-one before you sign a partner’s contract...Are you threatening them?”

“Well, it’s a good idea to threaten lightly.”

He was caught by a large sum of 300,000, but at the end of the interview by Ryuen, he succumbed to it.

After all, the amount to pay on the agreement is far less than the surface.

“I’m educating the first-year guys to understand that I’m better than Sakayanagi.”

The selection of people who are not bound by points and brands, but who instinctively see through the class that wins.

That’s what I’m really looking for in this special exam.

The goal we must look forward to over this year is to drag down Sakayanagi’s class A.



## D-CLASS WITH D-CLASS

It is Thursday and the weekend is approaching. After school, I accompanied Horikita to the library.

I am going to talk to the students in the first-year class D that Nanase will bring to meet us today.

On the way, Horikita and I had a conversation.

“Have you looked through today’s update yet?”

“There are 17 groups formed at the moment. That’s a total of 73 pairs.”

The number of pairs itself is not something to be held up on, but there is one thing that differs from the previous two updates.

Two students from the first-year class D decided to partner up. That was a sign of activity from the first-year class D which, so far, had made no such moves.

“I’m a little impatient. I thought Kazuomi-kun would do something about his class partners.

I talked with some students in that class during lunch break, but I was treated like I didn’t know anything and wasn’t taken seriously when I asked them about it.”

“It’s at a point where they’re acting like prisoners locked up in a jail.”

It might be because Hosen ordered them to keep quiet and not talk about their class problems with students from other classes.

“That’s right. Anyways, it’s a good thing that I decided to meet Nanase-san after this. If it’s her then she might be willing to hear us

out about that as well.”

Horikita has never had a proper conversation with Nanase. There was only the time when she met her together with Hosen.

Nevertheless, Nanase, when she stood beside Hosen, seemed like she was the one that Horikita could talk to and be understood by.

When I talked to Nanase, I got a strong impression of her being an honest student.

We arrived at the library and stepped inside.

“Oh, that’s rare. It’s a customer.”

The first person to welcome us was Shiina Hiyori—who was in the second-year class C—and not Nanase.

As one would expect of a typical bookworm, she seemed like she visited this place as soon as school finished.

“We might end up being a little noisy today; we’ll be discussing the special exam with some first years.”

“Is that so? Then, I think that the seat at the end would be best. I’m quite sure that even if you do make some noise, that there will not be anyone that would be awfully disturbed. Besides, when the first years with whom you are meeting enter the library, they would be able to see you right away.”

We took her advice and went to the table at the end.

“Is class C doing well?” Horikita asked Hiyori.

“It’s alright. Things are going well I guess.”

It’s hard to discuss any further than that—class C being one that we compete with. We only exchanged some simple words and said goodbye. I somehow worried about Hiyori but followed Horikita to the seat.

“Nanase-san aside, it’s a question whether Hosen will come to this meeting or not.”

“That’s right. It’s going to make quite a difference depending on whether Hosen comes to this meeting or not.”

It’s not like it would make much difference to us whether Hosen would be brought along or not, though it’s just that Hosen will most

likely be the one talking the most with how intimidating he would be to the other students.

If that's the case, we'll have to make serious and much larger negotiations without having taken any precautionary measures to prepare for them.

"May I ask you to discuss with me before the actual discussion? Are you studying?"

"Well, here and there. Is there something wrong with that?"

"Well, obviously I've been able to take the time to study in my own time and was getting curious about whether you were being able to do the same or not."

"Oh? Are you sending salt to your enemy?"

"No way. I'm not the kind of person that would give up an unfair advantage to make things fair. This is a game I have to win."

Still, she seems to be worried whether I am studying or not.

In summary, she's just making the idea that she was too busy dealing with special exams an excuse to say that she wasn't studying.

"You've been spending a lot of time bringing together the second-year class D."

"I'm always making sure I'm focusing on my studies; I don't have any problems." She seems to have confidence in her daily studies.

"Don't worry. I'm not going to lose."

"That's fine, but....."

She's the one that doesn't seem to be taking the test seriously because it doesn't look like she has been studying no matter how you looked.

On that, there was one other thing I wanted to ask from her.

Horikita thinks that if she can't focus on her own studies, teach Sudou how to study, and organize our class in addition to that, that it wouldn't be right.

I wanted to know whether she would even make it at this pace.

As I was about to ask about that, Nanase appeared at the entrance of the library alone. As soon as she saw our table. She bowed her head



from the distance and approached us. It seems that Hosen was not going to show up for the first discussion.

“I’m sorry to have kept you waiting, senpai.”

“We just got here not too long ago too.”

When Nanase sits in the seat opposite of Horikita, the discussion begins with a small greeting.

“Thank you for making time for this discussion.”

“Likewise, thank you for your help again erm...”

“It’s Horikita Suzune.”

“I have done nothing to receive thanks from my senpai. I’d rather thank you.”

All 3 of us from the same rank class—the lowest of the low.

Horikita, who greeted her back, immediately moved on to talking about the main subject.

“I’m going to get straight to the point. Will you listen?”

“Of course.”

“First of all, I would like you to tell me about what is happening in the first-year class D. It was just today that two students confirmed who their partners would be in your class, but the remaining 38 remain without any. You’re one of them, aren’t you, Miss Nanase?”

I don’t know if it’s Hosen’s doing or someone else’s but it’s clearly obvious that someone is controlling your class.

“That’s right. I thought you were going to ask me that. You asked a similar question to Hagiwara today as well, didn’t you?”

Hagiwara is a student who is in first year class D as well. It seems that Nanase already knows that Horikita contacted a student in that class during her lunch break. If so, should we think that she knew we would contact her from the very first day we met?

“I’m surprised. It seems you have done your research.”

“Many of the students are already following Hosen-kun’s instructions.”

Nanase admits that Hosen is leading class D without a single bit of ambiguity.

“Don’t you think he’s terrible? No, that’s not the only thing you think that he is. Exactly what was it that he did that convinced you?”

Nanase momentarily gestures some thinking.

“I’m very sorry, but I can’t answer any specific questions. It is a method that Hosen-kun came up with to bring the class together. I don’t know if it’s right or wrong, but it would be a betrayal to leak it to an outsider.”

“That’s right. You’re very right about that.”

Answering Horikita’s question like that, Nanase bowed her head lightly, gesturing her gratitude for not having pried any further. Just because she’s her senpai doesn’t mean she would have to talk to her about everything. As I thought, Nanase is a hard person to crack through and will remain as a loyal member of class D for the first-years.

“Then I’ll talk about the main subject. I wonder if it would be nice to think that we could partner with the first year class D just like the two in your class who decided to partner yesterday. If we shared some information from our class to have this relationship with your class, would you accept?”

After all, a relationship without any gain for him would not spark even a dent of interest from Hosen.

By that, it would be reasonable to assume that the two that have paired up in that class were paid a high number of points.

“But what I’m asking for today is a different contract: I pay points for you guys to accept this relationship.”

“I know. I have heard a little from Ayanokouji-senpai, but it is a cooperative relationship that covers students who are concerned about their academic ability, right?”

“Yes. The fact that you came to talk with me after understanding means that there is room for negotiation.”

“I want to think there is.”

Nanase’s face clouded. As she continued talking.

“Hosen-kun’s thinking is based on an individualism that has always

been deeply rooted. Control. In this situation, students with low academic ability are left without finding a partner. Sorry. It is still a big problem if you cannot get private points for 3 months. I am worried that I would be rated as a student who could not find a partner. No, it may not be a big problem, really. What I wouldn't like is if that individualism were to continue to take the lead in the future and classes will be incohesive. That's it."

Horikita listens to Nanase and predicts the future of the first-year class D in her head.

"That's right. If there is no one that can help our class, the fight by individualism will naturally increase. If the situation continues, no one will show up even if someone in our class asks for help. And if our class faces an exam that will be played together with other classes, we will not be ready to fight."

That's why Nanase seems to be negotiating with Horikita on her own. It's because she doesn't want to bring this up in front of Hosen.

"Are you afraid of him?"

"Yes..."

An immediate answer without hesitation.

And Nanase, who hadn't looked at me so far, finally did. It was the same eye she had shown twice. The eyes that said, 'I won't give in to violence.' It's not that much to worry about, but Nanase might be the only other person that could lead the first-year class D.

If this is a chance to make Hosen change his way of doing things, I would seriously thank you.

"Then I'll ask you a question. How many students are currently struggling to find a partner in class D in the first year? Please tell me to the extent you can answer."

The OAA app tells how many students haven't decided on a partner. Not how many students think that they couldn't get a partner at all.

She thought for quite a while and then finally came out with it.

"At present, nearly 15 students are finding it difficult to decide on their own partner."

“Fifteen students... It’s more than I thought.”

However, the second-year class D also has many students who have not decided their partners.

There is room for negotiations if you think about the combination well.

“Nanase-san, if you would be able to, I would like to make a contract with you.”

“Is it a big contract?”

“I want us to combine 15 pairs of partners in both our classes and finish them all at once. It doesn’t matter whether their academic ability is E or A. Of course, there are no ulterior motives in this relationship. It’s an equal partnership to help the students who are struggling to find their own partners.”

In other words, it is a relationship that benefits both our classes.

It was just that the conclusion of this contract will greatly reduce the chance of a dropout.

Even though this is a good deal, both Horikita and Nanase know that it will not be so simple.

“This is a big premise if you can sign the contract, but there is no guarantee that the other students from your class will be able to save people in the vicinity of the academic ability E who are in our class. Most of the students that are troubled because they can’t get a partner are also focused on their academic ability—they are mostly at levels D and C.”

If the maximum academic ability is C, there is a big risk to have them partner with students of academic ability E. It can be said that it is almost impossible for us to both benefit from this.

“I really need you to do your best so that it doesn’t happen. Then again, I think that the contract is not a very good one.”

Nanase does not deny and admits.

“Kazuomi-kun would never help you guys free of charge, especially now.”

The second-year class A has maintained a high amount of class

points from the time of admission and has a lot of money. Even though the class C spread out an amount of private points from Ryuuen's plan, Hosen would still choose to work with Class A rather than any other classes. Considering the situation in which such two classes are competing for students at a high amount of private points, it is better to choose the class that will be paying more to be partnered up with Nanase's class.

In other words, the idea, policy and Hosen's way of doing things are also correct.

However, even if the price is put, it is certain that the first-years class D, has a higher number of students compared to other classes. That is also proportional to the lack of students who will be partnered.

"Even if it's good for the class?"

It is a minus that the private points which were originally supposed to be given to everyone cannot be obtained by the students who can't find a partner. That's something that goes without saying.

"There are many sides to the story, and I hope that you understand that.

Apparently Nanase herself is taking Horikita's proposal favorably. But.

"But... I don't think Kazuomi-kun will accept this proposal free of charge after all."

After she said that, an empty silence filled the table. I somehow could guess what Horikita was thinking.

"I've only found out about one thing. Hosen doesn't just accept any deal proposed from any class.

What do you mean?

"I thought the only thing that would spark Hosen's interest is by using a huge amount of private points. However, if that is the case, we should be looking at applying lower-level students more aggressively. In other words, you can say that you're going"

"That's true. Three months' worth of private points can't be fooled. If you don't want to get expelled you can save the private points for

your own selves and it seems like Hosen is doing that for his class.”

I felt that continuing like this won’t bring the conversation anywhere.

“It is as you say Ayanokouji-senpai. Hosen-kun doesn’t get anything in return from helping his classmates but instead he likes to impose rules and controls the class using violence.”

The students who decide to not listen to Hosen will be abused and if we decide to help, he will use violence on us as well.

Therefore, I can’t accept your proposal even if I wanted to, I just can’t.

I knew from the beginning that it was meaningless to negotiate with the first-year class D from the moment they decided to not attend the exchange party.

“Can’t you control even a small number of highly academic students in your class?”

Horikita’s proposal has no flaws in any way. It’s just a way to save each other’s classmates.

Unlike the second-years, there are naturally little feelings for our classmates and friends during the first semester. It’s impossible to develop a feeling of wanting to help your classmates only a week or two after entering the school

Unless their class had someone, who are like Hirata or Kushida, there was no way they would develop those feelings so fast. “I talked to some of them, but none of them really cared for their classmates and only cared about themselves.”

“The reward is a big premise, isn’t it?”

“Wouldn’t it be possible for a few people in your class to sign the contract?”

If the stance is to aim for the big picture, such as class A and C, a huge amount of money will be required to recruit a large number of students. However, if you limit it to a small number just to prevent you from leaving school, you can save money.

“Well, I guess...” If there really is no way for her to accept this

proposal. We'll just have to try another way."

After saying that to me, Horikita immediately turned to face Nanase.

"What shall I do?"

"Now, the form of fighting in the first- and second-year classes are different. First-year students don't have a risk of leaving school, so you're in a better position. But this relationship won't last forever. The day when you guys will have to fight at the risk of leaving school will come." Even if you teamed up with other classes there's no guarantee everyone will have enough points to save themselves."

Some students will be saved, and some students can't be saved.

"That's why we want to sign an equal contract without creating a vertical relationship with points. And I want to build up a relationship of trust. A special relationship of trust that can be done only because we're in different years."

Horikita explains that when a student in the first-year class D needs help, he or she can consult with her on equal standing. In short, it is a strategy that emphasizes the same trust as Ichinose.

The only difference from Ichinose is that we partner with only the first-years class D rather than with all the first-year classes.

The special test has already entered the fourth day. We don't have much time to spare.

Nanase should have fully felt Horikita's spirit.

Still, her heavy expression did not lighten up.

"I understand what you want to say. But I don't think you understand it yet. Many first-year students are already eager to save private points. They will see it as a loss to partner up with someone without getting paid."

I guess it'll just take time to understand the school system.

"Currently, there are two big barriers to working with the first-year class D. It is necessary to persuade the honor students who still haven't found a partner yet. In other words, we have to establish this relationship by working together with Hosen."

"If you look only on the surface, the first-year class D has many

boundaries that have yet to be crossed by Hosen, so the merit of establishing a relationship where the first-year students will only be getting points is not beneficial at all. But if he decides to work together with us, we can cooperate in future Special Exams and will be able to help each other when we need it.”

Is Nanase really aware of that fact?

“Let me have a discussion with Hosen-kun.”

Horikita decides that it is impossible to proceed without the presence of Hosen, so she decides to end the conversation.

If only you were him. Anyways, I’m ready to talk to him.

“I understand. I’ll try to call him.”

Nanase took out her cell phone and went straight to the entrance of the library.

“It seems that Hosen-kun’s control is bigger than I thought.” That’s right.

“My policy of working with the first-year class D is... not wrong, am I right?”

“Building relationships with a view to the future is not a bad strategy. It is a bigger premise than Sakayanagi and Ryuuen. If only Sakayanagi and Ryuuen tried to build a relationship of trust with talented people in all classes in the first-year through a plan and not by using private points, they would be a much bigger threat than any other class. Ichinose is building a solid relationship of trust by saving the weak, although there is no point to that. And you’re like Ichinose, but you’re trying to create a cooperative relationship that focuses on only one class? You’re becoming a leader strong enough to compete with the three of them.”

Horikita whispers a little after listening to my words.

“The rest is whether the negotiations can go well.”

As we waited for Nanase’s return, I saw Nanase calling me with a beckoning cough while bowing from the entrance.

I wonder if something has happened.

“Would you like to go?”



The two of us left the library and joined up with Nanase. “Excuse me, senpai... Kazuomi-kun is connected on the phone.” Nanase holds out her cell phone to Horikita.

After receiving the mobile phone, Horikita takes on the challenge of talking with Hosen in speaker mode.

“I’m sorry to have kept you waiting.”

“Yo. I heard the story from Nanase.”

“If possible, I’d like to meet you in person and explain it to you.”

“You don’t need to. I don’t want to see you.”

Hosen said so with a laugh.

“Is that so? Are you not even going to negotiate?”

“Exactly that. I didn’t even need to take this phone call, but Nanase made me do it.”

“But, Hosen-kun, I think it’s OK to consider it.” Nanase said

“You’re annoying. What authority do you have?”

“I don’t want to be killed, but please meet Horikita-senpai once.”

“If you can’t get the private points ready, you’ll never hear from me again.”

It seems Nanase was trying to keep her word, but Hosen immediately ended the call. Nanase tried to call him back but he did not accept her call.

“.... I’m sorry!”

With her head down, Nanase apologizes to Horikita and I. But there was nothing that Nanase did wrong.

“Raise your head. My policy and Hosen-kun’s policy are completely different, so it’s not going to work easily. I’m very grateful to you for helping me like this.”

“Really...?”

“Let’s leave it this far for today. In order to have a discussion with Hosen-kun, I’ll have to think about something. But I’d like to put on a meeting by the end of this week.”

If it’s going to be more than that, Horikita will have to look at things other than the first-year class D. That said, I just pray that it won’t

happen. It can be quite a bit of work to take the remaining students from the three classes that have already been devoured by the other factions.

“I’m very happy that my senpais haven’t given up yet. But...”

Nanase was a bit sad when she said that. You can’t have an equal cooperative relationship with Hosen, because even if this relationship is established, he will end it when he feels like it.

“At least I could tell Hosen-kun what I wanted to do. That’s enough for now.”

As time decreases, Horikita still finds it hard to conclude this conversation with Nanase.

Horikita suggested that we go back to the dorms together, but Nanase wanted to stop by somewhere.

And, she left wanting to meet again in the library tomorrow. Maybe she went to see Hosen.

“Let’s go home. We’re stuck with plans for the rest of the day.” After returning to the dorm, we saw Sudou and a few other people that seemed to be holding a study session in the dormitory. “Oh, and I wonder if you’ll be able to make it clear about who you’ll want to have as your partner soon. You don’t have to tell me whether you’ll move on your own or not. But that may have an impact in the future.”

If negotiations with Hosen begin, it will be necessary to adjust the number of people needed during the negotiations.

“There is a candidate who I think is okay to form a partnership with.”

“It’s not based on their academic ability; it’s a specific person, isn’t it? I wonder who it is.”

“It’s a secret.”

“What a secret... Is there any reason why you are hiding this from me?”

“I know that person only on the surface.”

“I thought I would decide on them if I saw them a bunch of times, but I’ll judge him within the week. Well, at the latest.”

“I hope so, but... I don’t know if you’re going to find a partner or

not, and if you don't make it, you'll risk getting expelled."

"Keep it in mind. I was sorry to hear that earlier, but are you in good shape?"

".... Are you worried about me?"

"You don't have to worry about my studies, I still have quite a bit of time before the special exam so you should worry about yourself."

If you don't find a partner at the end of the game, there is a possibility that it will affect your results in the written exam during the day of the test.

In addition to the study sessions with Amasawa every day, yesterday, I devoted my time to cooking up measures against Amasawa until late at night.

It is clear that fatigue is gradually accumulating.

"I'm sure I'll get tired. But I don't have time to rest now. I'm not going to fall until the special exam is over."

Not to mention Hirata and Shibata, students with excellent academic ability such as Keisei and Mii-chan have offered to cooperate with Horikita from the beginning. On top of that, Horikita decided to proceed with a plan based on the premise of working with the first-year class D, considering the possibility of facing another Special Exam that involves both the first and second-years. With everyone working so hard I guess I'll try a little harder.

It is an important question for how the second-year class D will settle in the fight against time.

## 1

It was a little chilly that night. Standing in the kitchen, I cooked my dinner that I bought from the supermarket.

Tom yam, the name of the Thai soup, is a combination of three techniques: boiling, mixing, and spicing.

"It's a unique taste, and it wasn't too bad."

The spice and acidity spreads through the room and the smell will

penetrate through the nose. It was so strong that it was addictive. After cleaning up, I turned the ventilation fan to drive out the smell that filled the room. I didn't notice the sound of the ventilation fan being drowned out, but I noticed that my cell phone was vibrating on the bed. I thought I'd call back later, but it did not want to stop at all, so I answered the phone.

"You're slow to answer the phone."

It was the first time I received a phone call from someone since the special examination began.

"You're the one who told me to call you at this time."

That's how she complained after I picked up her call.

"Sorry I was busy eating. So, have you been able to find out what I asked you to do this morning?"

"I've checked it out. Isn't there something you should say to me first."

"I'm grateful."

"You don't sound like you're grateful at all... Well, that's fine. According to the clerk, there has only been one sale since April of this year. It doesn't seem to sell that well compared to other similar products, so they said it would be nice if they could sell it soon. But, you know, there was a freshman who tried to buy it."

"One of the buyers almost sold it to the Freshmen, but we should be more concerned about who it was that tried to buy it."

"He didn't buy what you wanted him to buy."

It's quite expensive and I believe most of the first-years in class D already used up all their allotted points this month and even if they didn't who would buy a knife that expensive.

I don't think the freshmen this year will be that stupid.

"I asked him about it. Then, he said another student called out to him immediately after the accounting was finished, and she seems to have stopped him from buying it and returned it."

While listening to the details that Kei was giving out, I sorted out the situation.

What I originally thought of was him buying the knife without anyone stopping him from doing so.

I didn't expect that person to be involved in this matter as well. Do you know who prompted him to return it?

"Well, I don't know. But I do know that the one who stopped him from buying it was a girl.

"Even though you know the name of the purchaser who presented their student ID card, don't you know who stopped him?"

"No."

"Did you find my information useful?"

"Ah. It's going to be a lot more useful than I thought."

"Hehe, I'm capable. Thank you very much, but why did you get me to look into that?"

"...hello?"

I was thinking of an excuse to come up with, but the situation was not what I was hoping for.

I tried changing the subject.

"Now that you mention this, I hear you've decided on a special exam with your partner."

"Ah, yes. I believe it was Shimazaki of the first-year class B."

Now that I've done this, I'm going to change the subject a little more.

"I don't think your partner is bad, but how are you progressing in your studies."

"Not too good, anyways I heard you still haven't found yourself a partner."

"Is that true? I haven't seen you go to the class study group either."

"This exam is not completed by a single person. Your academic ability is D-. If you don't think about studying for this exam, you might risk getting dropped out; I suggest you join the class study group."

"What, if I were there, would you be able to study hard?"

"... Well, I'm going to show you that I'm working as hard as I can in front of my boyfriend."

Whether it's true or not is hard to tell, but it's still way too early to be confident.

"If so, tomorrow... Let's see. Can you come to my room at six?"

Since I must consider the amount of time needed for the meeting with Nanase tomorrow.

"Can I go out with you guys as well?"

"It's not about playing, it's about our studies."

"What?"

"I'll teach you what to study tomorrow."

First, I need to measure Kei's academic abilities to be able to understand the level she's at right now.

On top of that, if participation in additional study sessions will help her, I will also need to encourage her to attend as her boyfriend.

"Are you worried because I'll be in trouble if I drop out of school?"

Suddenly, I heard something that resembled a happy voice from Kei.

"It's natural. We just started dating and it would be bad if one of us dropped out so soon."

"Oh, that's right. That's true! Well, I can't help it!"

Saying this made her much more motivated.

She's honest, and it's just a small price to pay if she can move forward with this.

"What should I bring?"

"All I need is you to be in my room tomorrow. I am a little busy so I'm going to hang up."

"Hey, wait! Wait just a little bit!"

Apparently, Kei wanted to continue chatting with me and I decided to continue talking for a bit longer.

After that, we didn't talk about the Special Exam nor studies and just chatted for quite a while.

Finally, close to 81 people had decided on partners, and students who had narrowly been in the majority were finalizing their partners on Friday. The number of students who were becoming able to partner up with others was beginning to increase—that included the second-year class D.

The same goes for those close to me. Yesterday, Kei was one of them, and 2 members of the Ayanokouji Group confirmed their partners as well. It was Shibata that was the driving force behind them. It was nice that he cooperated with Yagami and introduced a part of the student body from the first-year class B. However, this won't solve everything. Yagami seems to not be the leader of class B and is just helping out the students that are struggling to find a partner. They don't have enough students to cover all of the students struggling to find a partner in our class.

Yagami has put out only one condition in his cooperation and that is to become Shibata's partner.

It happened yesterday, as it was announced in the OAA app.

Shibata seems to be the type of person that would cut to the chase and immediately find a good partner even though he had high academic abilities but it seems that there was no sign of dissatisfaction from Horikita when they were partnered up. Because there are still talented cards in play—including Horikita herself, Keisei, Mii-chan, Matsushita, and so on—in our class.

In any case, just because you have a partner doesn't mean you can feel safe.

Studying hard is a way you can reduce the chance of dropping out.

But most students will most likely start studying only after finding their partners.

There was also a sense of unity in our class and everybody was working together to help students with low academic ability to get partners.

This was only possible because Hirata and Horikita had worked hard to get this class together from scratch.

That's just the way it is.

A student from the class D stood up and started walking home. As if she was waiting for that timing, Horikita goes out to call him.

"It seems you haven't found a partner yet, Kouenji-kun."

"What's wrong with that?"

He is the only interference in the class and the only person who is not participating in this sense of unity in our class.

As a classmate, I thought I should listen in on the conversation. But Kouenji didn't say much in the conversation with Horikita.

"You're smart. I don't even think it's possible for you to drop out."

"Of course."

"That's right. Even if you team up with students with similar grades to Ike-kun, you'll get nearly 400 points by yourself."

Originally, I would have liked Kouenji to work as one of the precious cards for the class. But that would have never happened because of his attitude towards the other students.

"Huff. I'm not going to do anything in this special exam. The important thing is that my partner gets around 150 points. It's easy for me to get a score that exceeds the passing criteria, even if it's the minimum requirement."

The test says that the first-years need to get at least 150 points in their test. It's unlikely that his partner will score 0 points unless intended like the White Room student that's out to get me.

However, the point is that we still must trust our partners.

"And there is no need for me to go out of my way to talk and take steps to build a relationship with someone who might be my own enemy in the future."

"I mean, since you're not worried about who you're going to partner with, can you let me decide who to partner up with you? I think it's safe to work with anyone, but it's best for you not to get a 5% penalty."

It was a simple proposal that is to leave things to Horikita, and it was a proposal with only benefits.



“That’s a good deal. But I’ll refuse.”

“...Can I ask you why?”

“Because I am who I am.”

“The point is that I don’t want you to bother looking for a partner for me.”

Kouenji is Kouenji I guess.

“Are you satisfied?”

It is not possible to force someone like Kouenji to do anything if he is the type of person who prefers working alone and not cooperating with the class.

“Yes, for now. But It can’t stay like this forever. When the time comes and the class can’t be united, I’ll need your help to persuade him.” She says to me.

It’s not just about this special exam, it’s about looking ahead to the future as well.

Horikita seems to have wanted to keep thinking ahead—about the future.

“I understand perfectly that you want to rely on me, but I’m sure I won’t be able to do much.” I said to her.

Kouenji has no interest in our class affairs and It is close to impossible to get him to help the class.

“You can’t force Kouenji.”

Even though she knew, she was depressed.

“He’s serious about moving classes through collecting points, and it’s hard to think that we would be losing one of the most important trump cards that our class has.”

Nothing is more troublesome than a secret weapon that can’t be used. It is because of the expectation that turns into despair when the person does not meet that expectation.

“I’ll try not to count him as a member in our class.”

If you think of Kouenji as just a statue; it’ll make it easier to think of the future.

“I won’t give up.”

“Right....”

Well, it's good to be motivated, although it won't be much to persuade Kouenji.

### 3

As soon as we stepped into the library on the weekend, I saw a completely different atmosphere than the other day. Many first and second years had gathered. And most of the students were spreading out their tablets and notebooks to do things like study sessions.

It seems that a lot of students have begun to study without being proud of the fact that their partner has yet to be decided.

I remember that we also held a study session in the library a year ago.

“It's a bit of a hassle, I know. Will our existence stand out when the number of people increases at each table?”

“If that's the case, maybe it's better to take a little bit of a look.”

Fortunately, the seats we used yesterday are available at the back of the library.

I scoured the library and set my eyes on the only place I could find a spot for myself. Hiyori soon noticed my glance and started waving her hand. “Ayanokouji, I thought you'd be coming soon, so I left a seat for you.”

“Are you sure it's okay?”

“It's a large library filled with people after all. Please take a seat.”

“She is quite kind today.”

Why though?

The table was located at the same place as yesterday. She took out her study tools and started studying while waiting for Nanase.

But there was no sign of Nanase coming anytime soon.

“Nanase sure is late.”

It was about 4:30 pm after school. And the time is already 5 o'clock and still there was no sign of Nanase showing up.

I've sent her messages a few times, but there was no sign of her having read it. I was thinking about going to find her, but I didn't have any clue where I could do that either.

"Would you want to follow me to check the first-years classes to see if she's there?"

Just when she was about to do that, Nanase—who looked like she was in a hurry—showed up.

When she saw us from the entrance, she approached us with a short of breath.

"Sorry, I'm sorry. I've kept you waiting for quite a bit...!"

"That's fine, I was worried because I thought something had happened."

"I was negotiating to see if I could somehow bring Kazuomi-kun to follow along."

"I assume that didn't work out, seeing that he's not here."

There was no sign of anyone coming from the entrance other than Nanase.

"But didn't he stop you from going to talk to us today?"

"That's not it, because he knows I won't be able to decide anything by myself."

No matter how much Nanase does, the final decision is for Hosen to decide.

With that much confidence, there is certainly no need to stop Hosen's way of doing things.

"It seems like we have to forcibly meet him then."

"That is...."

"I already know that it's not that simple to get together, but unless I get to talk to him face-to-face, I may not be able to come up with a proposal that benefits both parties."

It seems that he didn't even want to bother coming here today.

"That's true..."

"Horikita-senpai wants to build an equal relationship with the first-year class D. Is that all there is to it?"

“Yes, of course.”

“If so ... could you hear out my idea?”

Nanase seemed to have come up with an idea.

“It is obvious that even if you propose to have equal cooperation with Hosen, you will be rejected. I think that it would be the same if Horikita-senpai met and talked directly with him. But if that’s the case, then what about negotiating with me? ‘

“Negotiating with you...?”

“Yes...”

Here, Nanase makes an unexpected proposal.

“I decided that Hosen-kun’s way of doing things would be bad for the class if it continued. Before that happens, I want to take countermeasures. By that I mean I would like to compete with Hosen for the position of class D’s leader. And I need the help of a second-year class D student for that.”

Horikita as well as I never assumed that such a proposal would be made.

A proposal about removing Hosen and making Tsubasa Nanase the first-year class D’s leader.

If this were to happen, the equal relationship that Horikita is aiming for can be immediately created.

“But we don’t have the material to judge whether Nanase-san or Kazuomi-kun is more suitable for being the class leader. But one thing I can say for sure is that we don’t have much time.”

The special test that is about one week away.

“Many of my classmates disagree with Hosen-kun’s way. In fact, yesterday and today I gave the proposal to 7 of my classmates and they agreed to cooperate because they were struggling to find their own partners.”

“Is it okay if it’s mostly students with low academic ability?”

“Yes. It’s okay. Plus, there’s 3 students with B academic ability among them.”

“...So that’s it.”

Horikita thinks a bit. Although it is not perfect with three people, if the number increases a little more, it may not be a bad idea to form a deal based on Nanase's proposal at all.

"Wouldn't it be troublesome if Hosen found out."

"It would be quite a problem. But I am not concerned."

"But it would be difficult to get students who can study on your side."

There is no way that a well-educated student would want to build a relationship of trust rather than getting paid private points for being someone's partner.

"You'll make up for that. Students who are not good at studying will not have to take a three-month penalty; we'll have Horikita-senpai pay them. In other words, points will be given."

Originally, I wanted to pay points and pull well-educated students to my side, but the strategy is that students who are not good at studying will also ask me to pay them points for their cooperation.

"This will not bother Horikita-senpai. Of course, Koizumi-kun would be angry after knowing this fact, but I'll take full responsibility if one of the students in my class gets injured due to helping me." Nanase said.

"It's a proposal that is risky and dangerous."

"I'm okay. I don't want to lose the trust I have with Horikita-senpai and Ayanokouji-senpai."

"If your classmates went over to your side, it would be much easier for you, but Hosen is currently in control and I am sure that they're all afraid of him."

"Even if I'm not recognized as the class leader, this proposal will still save Horikita-senpai's class."

Considering the proposal that she gave, it only had benefits for them, the proposal from Nanase was not bad at all.

Now, how will Horikita respond to this?

"This is to be clear. I want to work with the first-year class D."

"But there are other ways to do this without getting anyone hurt."

"I can solve all of the problems of the first-year class D by just getting Hosen on our side. You don't need to be a leader. If Hosen-kun came over to our side, then everyone would definitely cooperate with us."

"That's... yeah, yes."

"And if you conflict with Hosen, the first-year class D could be divided into two rather than one, and I can't let that happen. So, could you help me?"

Apparently, Horikita thought of an idea after having this conversation with Nanase.

Once Hosen comes over to our side, all subsequent problems will be solved.

"It's a dangerous bet. And if it fails, the first-year class D and second-year class D may never work together in the future ever again."

"I'm prepared ..... I think there is a possibility this would work but I would need more people to help."

"Well, I need to get going soon."

Nanase understands what Horikita was saying. And there was no need to use such a risky strategy for just a single person.

"Today, my intuition was correct by having this meeting with Horikita-senpai and Ayanokouji-senpai."

"I wonder what you mean. Didn't I reject your proposal...?"

"No, I haven't been rejected. It is just that Horikita-senpai and I have a similar way of doing things."

"It means ... you were thinking about persuading him from the very beginning?"

"Yes". Apparently, Nanase's proposal that she would become the class leader was a false proposal to test what Horikita would do."

If Horikita chose the choice to neglect the future of the first-year class D for immediate benefit of the second-year class D. It seems she would have stopped cooperating with us.

"We don't have much time as Horikita-senpai said earlier, but I can't move forward unless I make sure I can trust you guys. By

tomorrow, I'll be sure to bring Kazuomi-kun to meet Horikita-senpai face-to-face."

Nanase's proposal does not seem to be a lie, Nanase lowers her head and asks Horikita.

The date was Sunday and we were going to meet Hosen at a Karaoke bar in Keyaki mall.

Horikita nodded her head with the meaning of confirmation.

"I believe in you. I look forward to seeing Hosen tomorrow."

"Yes ..... always. We just want to avoid places where people can see. People might experience unpredictable responses if they saw us together."

"Well, karaoke may be the place. Yeah. If Hosen wants it, then we should meet there. We'll go closer to night as well because there are many students at the karaoke bar during the weekends."

If It's on a Sunday night, there's less risk in being seen.

"I understand. I will meet you guys there."

When the conversation finally felt as if it was getting somewhere, Horikita's mobile phone rang.

Horikita sighs after reading the message.

"What happened"

"It looks like the study session for our class is getting a bit out of hand without me being there."

I noticed it was already 5.30.

"Can you send me the full details of the meeting to my phone?"

"Sure."

Horikita lightly bowed to Nanase, and quickly got out of the library to go to the class' study group.

"Horikita must always help the whole class to make sure nothing ever happens."

"Horikita-senpai's quite a busy person huh?"

"Because she needs to bring the class together."

"I hope one year later, I can become good friends with you senpai."

"You didn't tell Horikita in detail, but how do you intend to call

Hosen?”

“It will be fine, no need for concern. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself though, Ayanokouji-senpai?”

“About me?”

The sun outside started to set and the sky turned orange.

“Horikita-senpai may be the class leader, but she doesn’t seem to be that to you, Ayanokouji-senpai. Isn’t that right?”

“The only explanation here would be you and Horikita-senpai dating, but that doesn’t seem to be the case.”

“What kind of person are you, Ayanokouji-senpai?”

I did not answer her question, Nanase put her arms on the desk. And stared deep into my eyes.

“Would you please answer me?”

It seems that what Nanase wants to hear isn’t what it’s related to Horikita.

But it was something different. That is asking what kind of person I am.

“I believe Ayanokouji-senpai is an evil and filthy person.”

It was a very drastic, intense word. And contrary to the wordless content, Nanase is too straightforward and she stared into my eyes saying that.

I don’t know what she is looking at so closely.

Up until now, even in the most trivial and tiny bits of information—like sense data which you gain from physical contact. There should be no reason that I would be evil.

It must have been a compatibility issue.

There must be a reason why she would think I was filthy.

Even if dropping me would be the most important proposition, that would not be something to do administratively. Always in close contact, she thinks that Kiyotaka Ayanokouji is a man that must be observed.

She thinks that’s the case. Instead of it being a simple withdrawal, it’s a wish of hers to prove that she is correct about this.



No, she is sure that she's correct about this.

If I had to drop a student like Ayanokouji Kiyotaka, I would surely think that way. However, the chances of her being the White Room student is quite low due to the direction of this conversation. It seems to be different.

"As long as I'm in contact with you like this, Ayanokouji-senpai looks like a normal person."

"That means, you see me as an unusual person?"

"That's not the case."

Nanase denied, but is it really true?

Nanase and I had met a total of four times, but during each of those times, she had always given me a strange gaze. I felt like I touched upon something I shouldn't have, and her response was fleeing.

"I'm sorry I forgot what I wanted to ask. Anyways, the important thing now is whether we could work with each other or not."

We stood up and started walking to the entrance of the library side by side.

In the flow of dissolution, I remembered something I wanted to ask Nanase.

"Speaking of which, you had said before, when you were talking about private points not being transferred for three months, you said 240,000 points. Why is that?"

Nanase's expression was confused.

"If you keep 800 points of the class points given after enrollment for 3 months, it is simply calculated as 240,000 points."

Nanase wonders.

Apparently, this year's freshman has a different start line from ours last year.

"We were first given 1000 class points last year."

"Huh? So, does that mean that you guys only lost 200 points in your first month here?"

"No, we were given only 800 points since the first day we arrived."

"That's what it is. Then what about class A and B for the first-

years?”

“I think they’re also at about 800 points right now. Shiba-sensei explained that.”

The first-years starting line is a lot different from ours.

“Do you know that our attitudes in the class will affect the class points we have.”

For the first-years, Shiba sensei, the class D homeroom teacher, talked to us about that.

“The school rules must have hit their ears painfully.”

“Yes. Lateness, absences, and tardiness in class can affect class points.”

Is there any possibility that class rules after May will be considered by disclosing such rules first because the number of class points has been reduced? In the OAA app, we can see that the social contribution is important, and even if it is hidden, students will be careful. I was trying to convince her, but Nanase thought about it for a little.

She showed something on her face for a moment as if she came up with something, but soon, it disappeared.

She did a little gesture trying to remember what she came up with.

However, if Nanase does not want to talk about it, I will refrain from pursuing it.

We reached the entrance of the library and left the library.

“I’m sorry about this, again, Nanase. Thank you for letting me know about your class points, but have you heard of ‘Protection Points’?”

When we were splitting to go our separate ways, I stopped her by asking her that.

“Protection points?”

“These points are used to protect a student from being expelled, but one point can only be used once.”

“I see, but why are you telling me this.”

“I got information from you. I thought it would be better to give back some.”

After saying that, I left Nanase.

I'm going to try to see if I can make use of Nanase's skills to make a good story.

#### 4

It took a long time, but thanks to Nanase's dedicated cooperation, it was decided we were going to meet on Sunday with Hosen. But the situation is unpredictable, but it can be said this was a step forward to reaching our goals.

Shortly before 6 pm, the room doorbell rang.

It was just after returning to the dormitory, Kei was in her uniform rather than her normal clothes.

"Sometimes, there's a lot of people coming and going out this time, so I was really concerned about using the stairs alone. There are not many girls who go in and out of a guy's room"

It would rarely happen unless the man and the woman were dating.

"So, let's get started right away."

"Eh, isn't there something more?"

With that in mind, Kei gave up a request to chat with me and started taking out her study tools.

Time is finite. The more time we waste, the less time you will spend studying.

"If there is no problem with your studies, we can go on more dates afterwards."

"Right... yeah....."

"First, we need to figure out what you are good at and not good at."

"How do we determine that."

"This is how:"

I took out five test papers. It was created by Keisei for the group to check their strengths and weaknesses. It is a very useful thing that carefully selected the number of questions considering the time it took to get started. This was also what was used in the study sessions with

Horikita and Hirata.

“Most of our classmates have already checked this.”

“Oh really?”

“The time limit is 10 minutes per sheet. Start immediately.”

“Ah!”

Kei begins the test while replying in a shock.

Then, 50 minutes later, Kei fell on the desk as if she was about to die.

“Oh, I’m so tired.”

“That’s okay, you were able to concentrate surprisingly well.”

“Because day after day I study even harder than before.”

While listening to her short story, I finished the scoring immediately.

“I see. Kei’s ability is well understood.”

“How was it?”

Perhaps because she doesn’t know her own capability, her eyes look mixed with expectations and anxiety.

“It’s decided you don’t need to attend Hirata’s study session starting tomorrow.”

“Yeah!”

“You’re doing pretty well all things considering, that is, if you can keep this up.”

“Your partner was Shimazaki, was it? Is he doing okay?”

“The score required for this special exam is 501 points.

According to your result, you should score around 200 points, Shimazaki would probably score around 350 points. I don’t think that 550 points is in the safe zone. And Shimazaki studies hard. So, I would recommend you keep up your studies and try to get around 300 points.”

“If you do so, you’ll have a higher chance to not get expelled.”

“I’m suddenly quite scared.”

“It’s important to get at least 250 marks to not burden your partner too much.”

“If you study this efficiently, you might be able to make it into the

top 10 smartest students in our class.”

“Here’s a little question.”

“Question?”

“Since you’re trying to teach me, your academic ability is not actually C is it?

“Hmm, yes.”

“If you could get high results, why bother hiding it?”

“I don’t want to stand out, so I don’t get very high marks, instead I get about average for every subject.”

“Well, then, how many points would you get if you were serious?”

“I don’t know.”

“Tell me. I’m not going to be easily deceived by you!”

She pushed my shoulder a lot while smiling at me.

“If you come to the study session properly starting from tomorrow, I’ll answer it.”

“Putting aside how many points you can get, you decide how many points you want to get?”

“Well, what the hell?”

All 5 subjects. In the first subject—mathematics—I had a bet with Horikita, so I have to get a bit serious for that one.

However, as with all subjects, if I did my best, I would stand out and the evaluation of my surroundings would change so I rather not do that.

“400 points”

“At the very least, 400 points are certain.”

“It is equivalent to Academic A”

An area where only a few honorary students, such as Horikita and Keisei, can reach in class.

Exactly 400 points, probably not necessary. So I’ll make it a bit lower, I guess.

“Can you really do it?”

“Naturally, there are no problems that I thought I couldn’t solve ever since the very first exam that this school gave me.”

I don't know how difficult this exam is, but it's a good place to test my learning capability that I learned during the White Room.

"Well ... let's study a little more, then you can go home."

"It's only 7 o'clock. Isn't it?"

"Yeah, but it wouldn't be a great idea for you to stay here for too long; if you're seen leaving a man's room then we would be in a predicament."

"It would be useful to tell Hirata about your situation tomorrow."

"Okay, so let's start right away."

"What?! So fast."

Kei puts her hand on the floor and looks at me face to face.

"Tell me what to do next."

## 5

An hour and a few minutes later....

I was studying in my room while teaching Kei.

To put it simply, she knows the basics of every subject so it's not that hard for her to learn quickly in comparison to other people.

She needed to study more than other people because she could not receive a legitimate school education because of how she had previously been bullied in her middle school.

"I wasn't able to learn the basics during my middle school years, so I struggled in my studies."

"Considering that, I can say that you're doing pretty well."

It is the right decision to give her my personal guidance to study.

"If you feel that studying is not that much of a pain, then you might be able to grow as much as Sudou."

"Hah..."

"What's wrong?"

Kei gazed at the floor.

I thought she was just staring at the floor for no reason, but then her hand reached out to me.



I wondered if it was some dust or a small piece of trash I left on the ground by accident.

“What?”

Saying that, she sticks her arm out in front of me and shows me what’s on her hand.

It’s was a long piece of reddish hair.

“This is a girl’s hair, isn’t it?”

Kei’s expression hardened as she looked at me like a demon.

“Red Hair! And Long Hair! No matter how you look at it, It’s a Girl’s Hair!”

“That is true. This length is physically impossible for my hair.”

Naturally the hair color is completely different from mine as well. Then, I remembered the day Amasawa came over to eat at my room.

“Who did you bring in your room!?”

I thought of coming up with a lie, but I thought that it would be pointless since she won’t believe me anyways.

“Are you jealous?”

“Is that bad!? I’m Kiyotaka’s Girlfriend, after all!”

This is the first time I’ve heard her get so mad over me.

After a girl comes into my room, I should clean it thoroughly.

I learned a new fact, but the calamity continues. Suddenly, the doorbell to my room rung and I went to check who it was.

I looked through the monitor.

Then, I saw the figure of Amasawa waving.

It was not me who reacted first, but it was Kei gripping the red hair in her hand tighter than before.

“Red hair, and a strange woman hmmm...”

It’s like she’s trying to solve a mystery.

Before I pressed the button to talk to her, Kei extended her hand and held the button and said.

“Yes!?”

A voice that contains outright anger spoke, and of course Amasawa was shocked.



“Ah, eto, isn’t this Ayanokouji-senpai’s room?”

I forcibly pulled Kei’s finger away from the button.

“I’m sorry. What can I do for you?”

It is a visitor without a prior mention, but it is not possible to drive her away like this because she might spread rumors of a girl being in my room.

“Oh, is someone there? Should I come back later? I wanted to bother you because I lost something kind of important to me”

Kei stared at me, but I gestured her to return to the desk without turning back.

It seems that she wanted to be sure that it was Amasawa’s hair.

“No, it’s okay. Come on in.”

I press the release button of the auto lock to let Amasawa in.

“Are you sure? The other student inside might be mad at me if I came inside.”

“...Oh, my God!”

Apparently, Kei was about to explode upon hearing that.

It is Kei who suggested we keep our relationship as a couple a secret from everyone else.

“Anyhow, rumors will start to spread if we don’t explain our situation to her properly.”

“Well, now.”

She heard the voice of Kei anyways, and driving her away is not going to be very effective.

Rather, she would just spread some unnecessary rumors.

I was thinking about how to handle things for about a minute, then Amasawa rang the doorbell again asking if I was there.

“I’ll let you in, so give me a second.”

“Okay, I got it.”

I opened the front door and welcomed Amasawa.

“I’m sorry for suddenly coming over Ayanokouji-senpai.”

Ichika Amasawa looks at the extra pair of shoes on my doorstep and turned to look at me.

“There’s another girl here.”

“Girl?”

She laughs and I straightforwardly asked her.

“What can I do for you?”

“I came here because I forgot something in Ayanokouji-senpai’s room.”

“You forgot something in my room?”

“It’s my favorite hair band, but I can’t find it at the moment.”

She noticed that it was missing and decided to visit my room.

“Then, come on in.”

“I can’t let a guest stand here forever.”

It seems it would be a more efficient way if Amasawa were to explain why her hair was on the floor in my room to Kei.

“Sorry for intruding.”

Amasawa goes into my room without worrying about Kei. Whether she was at school or going home, she always kept her bag close to her, and so she met Kei who had been sitting and waiting in the back.

“Ah, konnichiwa! I am Ichika Amasawa from class 1-A, nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you.”

She had an obvious grumpy face, but she was enduring her anger.

“You’re a senpai, aren’t you? I’d like to know your name.”

“It’s Kei.... Karuizawa Kei.”

“Thank you Karuizawa-senpai. Oh, I guess you guys were studying together. Sorry for intruding.”

I was surprised that Kei was talking to her in a surprisingly normal tone.

“What is the relationship between you two?”

Amasawa overlooks the room and was asked that question by Kei.

“Wait a second for the answer to that question. Well, you don’t mind if I take a quick look, wouldn’t you senpai? I might have left it rolling around here somewhere.”

Kneeling down, Amasawa didn’t mind Kei staring at her at all. And

kneeled down to look under the bed. Then, she lifted her buttocks to look under the bed.

“Ah... senpai..., stop looking at my butt you naughty boy.”

Her tone of voice was done on purpose as if to make Kei angrier.

Kei reacts to what she said and stared at me angrily.

“I’ll try to find it as well.” I said to Amasawa.

So, I help her search for her hair band under the bed as well.

“Well, to answer your question that you asked..., Ayanokouji-senpai is like my personal chef?”

“What? What does that mean?”

Kei looked at me again as if she doesn’t understand what Amasawa was saying with an even scarier look then before.

“Sudou... she’s Sudou’s partner and I had to cook for her one time for something.”

“I’m sorry I don’t understand. Why did you cook for Sudou’s partner?”

Certainly, it is natural that she would not understand what I was saying since I was only talking about the outline of the story.

I continued looking for her hair band under the bed and re-explained it to Kei.

“Can I see the kitchen for the time being? I might have removed it when I washed it. Oh, and senpai, can you search your closet after your done with the bed?”

“All right.”

I didn’t find anything under my bed, so I started looking in my closet.

“What are you guys looking for?”

“She lost her hair band when she was in my room so I’m helping her find it.”

Kei asked me that question and then asked me again to explain my relationship with Amasawa.

“I told you. I’ve only cooked for her once that’s it.

“Hey, that’s really it, right.”

“Yes.”

“....Really?”

Even if I explain the reason I had to cook for her that one time, she wouldn't believe me either way.

I grabbed Kei's arm when she was trying to stand up.

I used my index finger to cover her lips from asking anything else until Amasawa leaves.

After doing this, Kei stopped asking questions as her face got a bit redder.

“You can look for it too.”

“Okay!”

“Even if you don't understand what I mean, just start helping me search for her hair band.”

“Ah! Ayanokouji-senpai! I found it.”

Amasawa's voice resounded from the kitchen.

Kei and I went into the kitchen at the same time, and Amasawa was holding her hair rubber on her palm.

“It seemed to have fallen under the refrigerator in the kitchen.”

She gave a small laugh and put the hair rubber into her pocket.

“It looks like I'm bothering you guys, so I'll come back later senpai.”

“I'm sorry if I upset you Karuizawa-senpai.”

“No. I'm sorry as well, I didn't know what your relationship was, so I got mad for no reason.”

With her bag on her hand, Amasawa went to the doorstep and put on her shoes.

“Sorry for teasing you, senpai!”

After saying that, she told Kei to join us the next time we ate together in my room.

“It's no fun if only the two of us were eating together senpai.”

“Of course.”

“Now, we'll be eating together with Karuizawa-senpai. Now then, goodbye~~”

Amasawa came in like a storm and left like one.

“Looks like you know a pretty cute kouhai huh, Kiyotaka”

“No matter what I say now, you won’t believe me either way.”

It no longer had the air of studying, but I will have no choice but to explain the truth repeatedly until Kei is satisfied.

## 6

Friday is over and it is now Saturday today, which means there’s no school today.

The five days of the week were affected by the special exams, so I had many opportunities to get involved with my kouhais. From the encounter with Amasawa from the first-year class A, I had to challenge Amasawa to a cooking contest to secure a partner for Sudou, and discussions with Nanase to conclude the first-year and second-year class D contract. And, Kushida talked with Yagami in the first-year class B for partners for our class including Kei. With things progressing this fast, I’m assuming all our classmates will have partners by the time of the test.

Even though, the white room student is still hiding from me. I had talked to many first-year students from multiple classes so it would be normal if I were to be seen by the white room student sent by Tsukishiro.

And as such the exchanging meetings with first-year students begins.

The first-years class A does not have a definite leader at the moment, and each of the students in the class have a strong influence to the class and they don’t need a leader at the moment. One of the reasons is that the academic ability of the whole class is high. The number of students who have B or higher academic abilities is the largest among the four classes. Many high-skilled students negotiate independently and have point contracts with second-year classes A and C. There are also students who are categorized as academic ability D of course, but because they excel in versatility, they have been picked up by class A

for the second-years. And as such 34 out of 40 students from class A have already confirmed their partners.

The first-year class B is like the first-year class A. By that I mean by classes not having a class leader. The high-skilled students sell themselves for private points to get other students as partners. The difference is that the first-year class B has partnered up with more class C students instead of partnering up with Sakayanagi. Is this the effect of Ryuuen offering more points than Sakayanagi? Details are unknown at this time, and Currently 33 people have decided on their partners.

Hosen controls the entire first-year class D with a strong influence. This is almost the same as Ryuuen's strategy of doing things last year. Both of our classes have the least amount of people who currently have partners, and if things go well with Horikita and Hosen, we might be able to get everyone in both our classes partners. Well, we'll have to see on Sunday if the deal goes well.

And finally, there's the first-year class C. It's the only class that I've never been involved with in the past week. Even though, a few of the students in class C have high academic ability, the class has not been mentioned from Horikita. Why is she not bothering with that class? This is probably because many students in class C have signed a partner contract with second-year class B during the exchange meeting led by Ichinose, and she successfully saved their classmates by using the meeting. There probably is a class coordinator, and there are no students below D academic ability in the class. In other words, almost everyone can secure a safe position. There are around 10 people left in the class unpartnered.

In the afternoon, I launched the OAA app, to check on the new partners being formed.

"Partners formed at the moment are at 105 pairs, nearly 70% of the first- and second-year students."

If you look at the number of people in the library yesterday, you can see that most of the students wanted to find a partner by the

weekend. It seems that there were movements from the first-year class D, a total of eight people have confirmed their partners. Did they get impatient during this weekend or did Hosen order them to get themselves partners?

Anyway, the remaining students who don't have partners are 55 in the first-year and 52 in the second-year.

The probability of the white room student being unpartnered is quite high.

To be honest, there is no guarantee that I won't make a mistake by teaming up with the white room student.

Of course, that's because the other person doesn't emit any odor. I was hoping to come up with something that can put me on the safe side. But I'll have to decide soon on a partner.

Although the negotiations with the first-year class D are near, I would still like to prepare countermeasures.

I decide to go to the Keyaki Mall after noon on Saturday to expand my possibilities.

## 7

The Keyaki mall on Saturday is naturally overflowing with many students.

In particular, the students who have identified their partners for the special exam were at the mall and were either studying with friends for the next week's written test or were out with friends for leisure activities. Most of the first-years were at the mall, and there was a possibility that the white room student would be nearby trying to blend in with the crowd to follow me.

The only way for the white room student to team up with me is by either meeting Nanase or directly asking me to be their partner. But If they were to directly ask me, I would know immediately if they were from the white room or not.

I would be able to sense if the person was from the white room.

Anyhow, it would be hard for him to blend with the first-years.

One year ago, back when I first entered this school, I was a bit similar.

There are disadvantages and advantages of growing up without knowing the outside world.

He wouldn't know what the term "student" would mean.

And that is because in the white room, we were forbidden to talk, and they did not plan to enroll us into schools.

So, in a short period of time, I decided to "perform" and make a character for myself.

I try to talk more than I usually do and change my tone as a slightly cheeky student with a somewhat engrossing perspective.

Well..... in the end, I felt it was tiring to act all the time, so I decided to return to my real self.

The reason for it is to understand that it is possible for me to become a 'student' in this school without concealing my true nature. However, the person who will have been sent this time is different.

He would be able to mimic other students and act like them so that I would not be able to notice. I don't know whether he would choose the path to be a student who doesn't stand out or choose the path of a student who stands out a lot especially by being a class leader.

This is an overwhelmingly disadvantaged situation, even though I am confident that I am winning on terms of individual skills. All he must do is drop me out of the school in any way, but all I can do is see how he will try to become my partner in this exam.

When I was leaving Keyaki Mall, I happened to meet Sakayanagi.

"Well, well, if it isn't Ayanokouji-kun, I see you have been interacting with a lot of first-years recently."

"The students with poor grades in my class will immediately be dropped out if we don't help them. I'm just working with Horikita to find partners for those students."

"I see. If they catch a bad first-year student, they'll drop out of school immediately."



Sakayanagi showed a certain level of consent, but that was not the end.

“But, is that really it?”

“What do you mean?”

“I thought that a freshman from the first-year was sent to drop you out of school and if you end up with that student, he’ll intentionally score 0 and you’ll both drop out together.

I pretended to not show any expression on my face, but Sakayanagi knew that Tsukishiro sent a student from the white room to drop me out.

“If you’re not concerned, then he may be able to use that to his advantage and drop you out. Thus, depriving you of your precious ‘peaceful’ school life”.

“Don’t worry about it.”

“Hmm... Why?”

“I’m going to take this exam seriously so don’t worry about me dropping out.”

Continuing school life is a top priority for me and if someone were to harm it, I would show no mercy.

“Well that’s good. If you kept half-assing things you might end up regretting it.”

“I see. I’ve already shown some of my strength to Mashima-sensei and a few others, so it would be more convenient for me to just reveal everything completely.”

Sakayanagi listens to my story and showed a smile.

“If you haven’t decided on a partner yet, why don’t I help you save time? I have a few students who I think can team up with you and won’t harm you in any way.”

It seems that there were a few students left in the first-years class A unpartnered, as determined by Sakayanagi.

“It’s a generous offer from me. So, don’t be afraid.”

“Do you have anything against my judgement?”

“Well you should make your decision soon.”

“If you end up dropping out, then you may come to regret not accepting my offer.”

“Don’t worry, I know how to handle my own problems.”

“Is that so? If that’s the case, I won’t say any more. I’m going to see how Ayanokouji-kun will fight from the distance. I’ll look forward to the day when we’ll have our rematch again.”

After saying that, Sakayanagi bowed her head and walked away. In a way, Sakayanagi and I have somehow gained quite a bit of trust from each other.

## 8

On my way back from Keyaki Mall.

“Excuse me, may I have a word with you?”

I heard a voice calling out to me from behind.

I looked back and I saw the figure of a boy and a girl. The girl seemed to be glancing at me while holding her cellular phone.

“I am Sakurako Tsubaki from first-year class C, and he is in the same class as me. His name is Riku Utomiya.”

“Are you the second-year class D student Ayanokouji Kiyotaka?”

Although the screen displayed on her cell phone was not visible, I could tell she had the OAA app open.

“Can we talk for a bit about the special exam?”

“About partners huh.”

“Yes. I’m currently searching for a senpai who can help partner up with me for the special exam.”

It’s too much of a coincidence, as if she’s been waiting for me for a while.

Are these people that have come to me dangerous? Or is Sakurako truly looking for a partner?

No, I can’t assume someone is dangerous just because they came in contact with me.

“I was struggling because I couldn’t find a partner for this past

week.”

The OAA app shows a student’s face, name, and grades, but of course it won’t show the personality of the student. That’s why you need to meet in person to determine if you can trust each other.

“By the way, Utomiya-kun already has a partner, but I don’t.”

Since her academic ability is not as high, she wants to work with a second-year who has the academic ability of C or higher.

In the second-year, there are multiple students with academic ability C. It would be too much of a coincidence if she chose me out of all of them. Is she really looking for a partner?

“Rather than standing and talking, how about we go to a coffee shop?”

Utomiya proposed that idea to me and I accepted it.

Certainly, it is not reasonable to judge someone when we just met. So, changing the setting would be a good idea for me to get to know them better.



Although it was crowded, there was an empty table by the corner of the cafe.

“Can you hear her out?”

Utomiya gave Tsubaki a signal to talk.

“I don't like borrowing or owing someone something, so I just want to have an equal partnership.”

Tsubaki said while looking at her nails.

Academic ability C with academic ability C is about the same.

There is hardly any superiority or inferiority.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Of course.”

“The percentage of students who have academic ability C and above are quite high. So why did you take so long to decide on your partner?”

There should have been some students who were willing to partner with Tsubaki in the second-year.

“That's...”

Utomiya was a little bit jammed with words

When Tsubaki looked at him, he naturally looked back at her and said.

“I'm the one to blame. I'm sorry I didn't say anything.”

Starting with such words, Utsunomiya started saying.

“At first, Tsubaki didn't consult anyone about finding a partner. And on Friday, she started to get impatient, and for the first time, she asked me to help her find a partner.”

So, in a hurry, he decided to help Tsubaki to find a partner.

“Many of the class C students seemed to have found their own partners though.”

Even though the exam is still a week away, it may be reasonable to rush things as it may disrupt her studies.

“A 5% penalty can prove to be quite a problem for Tsubaki's academic ability.”

That seems to be the reason why she wanted to be my partner. If

this was under normal circumstances, I would have gladly accepted, but I have a reason as to why I can't make an immediate decision. It's when I heard the rules of this special exam, and the white room student may still be one of them. The student who was most likely to team up with her, would be another student with academic ability C.

And this was why she wanted to partner up with me.

I just got to know Sakurako and Utomiya, so I didn't really know the personality of the both of them.

"I'd like to ask you a question. When you said you were searching for a partner and were calling out to them, how many people did you guys call out before me?"

I was going to start asking starting from that part, but an unexpected reply came back from Utomiya.

"I'm sorry, I lied. You're actually the first one we have called out to Ayanokouji-senpai."

Utomiya has apologized so much as if he was trying to break down my speculation.

"If Ayanokouji-senpai doesn't want to partner up with Tsubaki, then we will look for another person."

"But I happened to be the first one that you guys called out too."

"It's a coincidence, but there's also a reason why I called out to you first. I thought that if I asked from among the second-year class A or second-year class C, they might demand private points."

I see. It is true that the first-years are being bought by the second-years right now.

"It would not be strange if they demanded private points for partnering up with Tsubaki. That is true, but not all the students would demand private points. There are still many students, so there is still a possibility that some students would be willing to cooperate for free."

With that being said, it's a bit weird to say, "I don't know anyone in the second year, so I'm just going to team up with anyone if they don't offer me points."

Objectively, there is no reason for me to reason for me to reject this

proposal.

However, the options available were very limited.

“I haven't decided on a partner, but I found a student who I think is perfect for teaming up with me. I'm going to talk to him for a few times to see if we can actually work together.”

Half of what I said was a lie, but there was no way they could affirm it.

And, if I became Tsubaki partner, there is a chance she would be the white room student and plan to intentionally score 0 marks to drop me out.

“Yes, I see.”

Utomiya glances at Tsubaki, with a sorry look.

“Well, why not!?” Why are you not going to team up with me?”

As she learned that there was a potential partner that she could team up with here, Tsubaki did not back down.

“For reference. Who are you going to team up with in the first grade?”

Utomiya asked me that question as if he understands Tsubaki's motive.

“I can't say that right now, but one thing for sure is that the student is not in your class.”

By saying this, they'll get what I'm trying to say without asking for further details.

As they heard what I said, they understood that I could not reveal any personal information to other classes as they may be my enemy in the future.

“Let's go Utomiya-kun. It would be bad if we were to take up Ayanokouji-senpai's time.”

“... That's right”

“I'd like to thank you for calling out to me, and I'm sorry I couldn't make an immediate decision.”

The information I had on the student called Sakurako Tsubaki were low.

“This is my contact number.”

I was given a piece of paper written by Utomiya with his contact information, which he had prepared in advance.

“You seem to be unsure at the moment, but if you turn down your partner, you can call me. If you still think it's okay to work together at that time of course. I give you my regards.”

“I understand. Thank you.”

“Let's go.”

In Utomiya's words, Tsubaki folded her arms and got up and left

Then, she bowed her head lightly and left with Utomiya. It looks like they're going to find another candidate other than me.

“Sakurako Tsubaki and Riku Utomiya huh. I'll have to remember their names.”

But I will surely regret my decision in the future, if I ended up partnering up with the white room student.

## 9

On the same exact day, two girls from the second-year class D were walking side by side.

I'm Karuizawa Kei, and this is my friend Sato Maya. Until just a few months ago, we use to often hang out together, but recently our relationship has dropped a lot. It was fine until the point where we didn't even talk to each other, and it was all because I felt guilty unconsciously, which made it difficult to get in touch with her.

“Sorry Karuizawa-san, I suddenly called you out.”

“Not at all. I wanted to hang with Sato-san as well. Why haven't we hung out recently?”

“Yeah, that's right. At the beginning of the school, we hung out a lot just the both of us.”

I walked in front a little and turned my head back to look at Sato and said.

“What should we do? It's still a little early to have lunch?”



The time has just turned around 11 in the morning.

Sato suggested that we walk around for a little longer in the mall. However, when we were near the entrance of the mall. Sato called out to me and said.

“Hey, Karuizawa-san.”

“What?”

“Hey, do you want to go there instead?”

Sato, who was bored of walking around Keyaki Mall, pointed to the road leading to the school building.

“School? Do you have anything to do there? And I’m not sure you can wear plain clothing into the school, can you?”

“It’s not like I want to go into the school building. I just want to go to a place where there are no other people around.”

I frowned a bit for not understanding what Sato meant. No, I had a feeling that maybe just maybe, she may have figured it out, but I tried to push it into the corner of my head, and I was trying to convince myself that it wasn’t going to be that way.

I kept pretending to not notice anything.

“What’s the matter with you, Sato?”

“I have something I’d like to ask you.”

I agreed and we left Keyaki Mall and headed to the school building. Obviously, there were no people around as it was a Saturday.

“Don’t hesitate to talk, we’re friends, aren’t we?”

Her words were scaring me a bit, as I was aware, but I couldn’t speak.

My name is Kei Karuizawa and I have been one of the second-year class D leaders for about a year. A self-cheering person who does not think too deeply about other people’s feelings and only focuses on herself. Otherwise, the image I created up till now would have been destroyed.

“Sato, the image I have in class is just as I have just said.”

“So, don’t be discouraged or angry.”

I thought that if I did something wrong, it might have made Sato

angry, but I thought of nothing except hoping that she doesn't know. Maybe she knows, but I'm sure I didn't make it obvious.

"Don't be afraid to avoid having a bad relationship with me."

But Sato did not stop.

"Karuizawa... why did you break up with Hirata-kun?"

"Did I not say why?"

Not directly, but my heart started racing when I thought about the fact that she knew I liked Kiyotaka. Still, I'm not that experienced with lying so I might have given a hint to her that I like Kiyotaka.

"I heard the reason before from you, but I don't believe it one bit."

"Well, I guess it was a bit wasteful huh, maybe you were aiming for Hirata-kun's seat in the class huh?"

Sato was no longer able to control herself.

I denied what she said. However, my words did not reach Sato's ears.

"Karuizawa-san, you broke up with Hirata-kun. Is what you said really the only reason? Or is there another reason?"

Sato knew all along. The fact that I like Kiyotaka, that was the reason why our relationship changed.

"What do you mean?"

Until now, I had forced myself to calmly reply to her questions. In the future, if Kiyotaka and I broke up, the situation may be even worse for me, so I had to lie to Sato.

Whatever questions she asked, I would lie no matter who it was.

I was determined.

"...Karuizawa-san, are you dating Ayanokouji-kun?"

"What.....?"

That was an unexpected question. I was delayed in responding as I felt I was attacked from behind.

The delay I gave to respond to Sato's question may have been fatal. I could practically see through her mind right now.



Do you like him? I'm sure I could have endured that question if she asked that.

But Sato's question went even further.

"So, how long have you been dating?"

"Uh, eh, no, why?!"

"Of course not. You're going to deny everything I ask."

I could not admit the fact that we were dating.

"Ayanokouji and I? Why?"

My words were denied by Sato and she got even madder than before.

Her eyes were mad, and it looked like she was about to cry. No wonder, since Sato trusted me with talking about and helping her relationship with Kiyotaka, and I cooperated while hiding the fact that I was attracted by Kiyotaka as well. After all, if I was in Sato's position, I would be mad as well.

I could no longer deny it, and with this Sato was sure I was going out with Kiyotaka.

"When I was aiming for Ayanokouji-kun, and when I asked you for advice. Did you like him before that?"

"Cho, wait a minute. I'm ..."

I felt like I had received an arrow that pierced into my heart.

"When I.... I talked to Matsushita-san. She said that you broke up with Hirata-kun because you liked Ayanokouji-kun. When she said that I was convinced."

I have already heard about Matsushita's doubts about my relationship with Kiyotaka from Kiyotaka himself. It was a situation I could no longer escape from.

"Speak honestly, or I will not be able to see Karuizawa-san as a friend anymore."

She was on the verge of crying.

And this girl was going to be friends with me until the very end.

"That.... is."

I scrutinized Sato's eyes seriously. And I couldn't betray her any longer.

“What do you want to know?”

No, I couldn't help but answer her questions. All I can do here is give an apology. But even if I did that Sato-san would never forgive me.

“I.... Aya... Yeah, it is as you say I am dating Ayanokouji-kun.”

When Sato heard the words, she started crying. Once confessed and rejected, but Sato still liked Kiyotaka.

“I knew that you liked Kiyotaka. I'm sorry.”

“When did you guys start dating?”

Her eyes were cold and shallow, and I wanted to escape from her gaze, but I couldn't.

“We started dating at the end of spring break.”

“What I want to know is when you started liking him.”

“... I don't know specifically, but it was before I was consulted by you for when you asked me how to get closer to Kiyotaka.”

“I see.”

I don't think she was satisfied with my answer.

“You are angry, right?”

I couldn't see the eyes of Sato-san, as she was about to cry.

“I didn't feel good. Even though I knew you liked him, I didn't tell you the fact that I also liked him as well.”

Nothing can be disputed in that regard. After a short while, Sato pulled my left cheek.

“Karuizawa-san, I'm convinced with your answer.”

It was a little price to pay.

“One more time, all right”

I decided to extend my right cheek. Even so, the pain that Sato suffered is still greater than me.

“No, it's... I don't think I'm brave enough to do it again. I mean I'm sorry I hit you.”

“No. I'm sorry. I kept it from you all this time....”

“I couldn't help it. Ayanokouji-kun looked so much cooler than Hirata-kun.”

Involuntarily, I hugged Sato with her arms wide open.

“What, Karuizawa-san!?”

“...I'm really sorry!”

I wanted to say it. I apologized a lot, but I still couldn't bear being happy. It's hard to love the same people, and it also means only one person can be with him.

It's not about winning or losing. Surely, more and more people will be aware of the appeal Kiyotaka has.

I will fight harder than before. If I was in her position, I would take any opportunity I have to be with the person I love.

Maybe in the future, my biggest rival could end up being Sato.

“Can we go for some tea?”

Sato nodded in her head and forgave my selfish actions.

## FOOTSTEPS OF THE DROPOUTS

It is after 8:30 p.m. on Sunday. The designated day came from Nanase. Today's discussion is likely to decide whether to work together with the first-year class D.

I must move faster in order to secure myself a trustworthy partner, since most students other than the first- and second-year class D students have already decided on their partners.

If this discussion doesn't come together, there's also the possibility that we'll be forced to make big concessions to avoid penalties.

Horikita will accompany me to the discussion and Sudou as well. He might have had some desire to be with Horikita, but he's most likely worried about Hosen. Depending on the situation, it is expected that Hosen will use violence against us. Of course, Horikita found it unnecessary for Sudou to attend the meeting as well. Horikita did not give Sudou permission no matter how many times she was asked. The reason is that it's expected to become a place for serious negotiations, and she judged that Sudou's existence will become a drag. However, I asked Horikita to allow him to attend.

The reason for this is that Sudou will move on my behalf even if I don't do anything. If it's Sudou's ability, I'm sure he'll be able to handle it. After all, Horikita allowed Sudou to attend on the condition that he will never say anything during the discussion.

“Yo!”

When I came down to the lobby of the dormitory, Sudou was already sitting on the sofa and waiting. Moreover, he shows me a cheerful smile. I have to correct what I said a little bit, as it seems that he had a bigger desire to be with Horikita than I expected.

“Are you doing well in your studying for the test?”

At this stage, if Sudou, who has an academic assessment of E, scores more than 250 points, it is already a great achievement. From next month onward, the academic ability judgment in the OAA app might increase.

He seems to be trying to not only show his self-confidence, but also to show his usefulness. His laziness has also greatly reduced, and the attitude he has in class is serious. He changed a lot.

“You seem to like studying.”

“There's a lot of fun when I solve questions correctly in every subject, and it's because Suzune praises me and gives me the energy to study as much as I can.”

At the beginning of the school, he began to feel calm. It doesn't seem like it's easy to get rid of the quick habit of getting upset, but if he could stay calm no matter who provoked him it'll be a lot better on his image. I couldn't control Sudou. He kept getting nervous and looked at the wall to see his own reflection.

It was like he had the state of mind of a boy who's going out on a date for the first time in his life.

Sudou, who noticed that I was in fact ‘Ayanokouji’ and that I was also watching him, he whispered while looking at the surveillance video.

“If I confess at this stage, I think that Suzune is going to accept.”

And the expression that he had changed immediately to a hardened and serious face. I don't know what answer I should give to Sudou right now.

“But maybe it's impossible?”

“I know that Suzune herself is not the type of person who will fall in love. But it's not just that. I don't know how high the chances of me



are getting accepted right now.”

“So far, I've been getting along pretty well with Suzune and our classmates.”

“I'm working hard now, but I don't take it for granted because the burden I caused for the class can never be atoned. For the next two years, I'm going to improve my strengths and then gradually eliminate my weaknesses. Then, I'm sure that I'll be of use to the class by the time I graduate.”

“Maybe so.”

Sudou can be a bit stubborn sometimes but because Sudou has good physical abilities, it will be useful for the class.

I've come to be able to look at him calmly, imagining him growing into an indispensable piece like Hirata and Shibata. Because of Sudou, what I wanted to ask came to mind,

“If you make an effort for the class, and you have become the most serviceable person in the class. If Horikita doesn't accept your confession, what will you do then?”

When if he learns that his efforts will not bear fruit, he will have the potential to fall, especially because Sudou is trying to do his best for Horikita.

“Well, maybe I'm going to have to stop you?”

“Maybe you will hit someone after being rejected. But, if you do that, Suzune will be disappointed, wouldn't she?”

I'm sorry to say that.

“Of course, your intentions are real. But the real question is when you actually confess. No matter how positive you are to take it passively, there are a lot of things that will change if the stress starts to strike.”

“That said, if you can say this much at this stage, don't you have to worry for the time being?”

“Oh, it looks like she's here,”

I saw Horikita in the elevator. Sudou, who was standing still now was somewhere floating, and left the place once to calm himself down and

turned his back to the elevator, and began to take a deep breath with his arms up on his front.

Soon, the elevator arrives on the first floor and Sudou took a deep breath. Horikita showed a slightly confused face, but then Sudou immediately said,

“I’m going to take a deep breath. Sorry, but please wait for a bit.”

“What is Sudou-kun doing?”

“It seems he is taking a deep breath.”

Horikita, who showed a slightly confused face, quickly returned to her usual expression.

The desired meeting place is a karaoke place in the keyaki mall. It is popular as it is a place where you can play until late night because it can be used until 22:00 on both weekdays and holidays. Speaking of karaoke, it's a matter of course, but it's one of the entertainment facilities. It's often used as a place to relieve stress and to hang out with friends, but it also has another big role in this school. That is, it is a suitable place for private meetings without anyone eavesdropping. We are going to have an exam next week, so I don't see much sign of people, especially students during this time of the day. Therefore, it is the best time to have a secret discussion with Hosen.

“Hey. Is it really possible to trust that cheeky first year?”

“If we didn't think we could work together, we wouldn't have taken the time to come here from the beginning.”

It is because it's judged that there is a possibility, and it is by going all out.

“At this point, most of the best first-year students have already been secured by Sakayanagi and Ryuen-kun, and Ichinose-san is helping the weak. The only way for us to get in is to fight on a wheel of trust.”

“That's right.”

“Yes. That's why Hoizumi-kun's presence is both a pinch and a chance for us, and Hosen does not like Ichinose's way of doing things. That's why the possibilities come to us in Class D.”

“How far can we sign a contract without making concessions?”

“The more time we waste, the more impatient the second-years are. Since many students have already found their partners, it is inevitable that they will be disadvantaged.”

We don't have to worry about our classmates getting a penalty. I'm sure she'll find out a way to challenge Hosen.

“By the way. It's nine o'clock, isn't it?”

The time is still before nine o'clock, and there are about 30 minutes until the appointed time.

“It's okay. I want to get there first.”

There is no such thing as ‘slacking off’ to a person like Horikita. Sudou didn't know why, but he felt that he needed to be wary of the first-year students, especially Hosen. I received a piece of paper and a board with the room number from the clerk and entered the room.

“Can you tell Nanase that we've arrived at the arranged location?”

“I know, I'm doing that now.”

I sent a message to her telling her that we've entered the store. I was not particularly surprised, and received a reply immediately saying that ‘We will arrive by the scheduled time.’

“Let's order a drink first.”

“I don't mind waiting.”

After deciding, each of us starts to look through the drink menu.

“You can order anything you want.”

“What will you have?” She asked me.

“Then, some potato chips please.”

Horikita orders the food and drinks through the landline built in the room. Sudou felt a sense of tension from asking for the menu, and he went to hold a microphone in the room.

“Well, then we're free until the scheduled time, so why don't you two sing a song?”

“I'm not singing,” Horikita immediately answered.

“I'm not going to sing as well,” I said

We got to the karaoke place first and ordered for drinks and food.

It must have been because Sudou wanted to hear Horikita sing. Sudou looked a bit sorry because Horikita didn't want to sing and told him to not say anything unnecessary or rather not talk at all during the meeting with the first years.

Sudou didn't get the answer he wanted so he was discontent. He doesn't seem to like Horikita's answer, so he bit his lips, and when it was time for the appointment, Nanase was the first one to show up.

“Senpais, I've kept you waiting, I apologize.”

“Move, Nanase.”

That was called out from behind by Kazuomi Hosen who forced her to move for him to get in the room.

“You've come on schedule. I thought you'd be a lot later.”

Horikita tells Hosen that it was nice of him to arrive at the scheduled time on the appointment meeting.

“If I decide to go somewhere, I will go. And It's just a little early, and I didn't care if I arrived at the appointed time. It seems you guys have arrived much earlier than that, but...”

“Was it so disgusting that we were waiting for you?”

Saying that, Horikita tells Hosen to broaden his horizons.

On the desk had a few drinks and food. The table is arranged so nicely that it looked like we were having fun with karaoke just before they came.

“That's what it looks like.”

The bargaining has already begun.

“Good”.

Hosen sits comfortably on the sofa and showed a big body figure that didn't seem like he was just a first-year.

“Spread around and sit.”

“So Nanase's explained that she wants our class to help yours?”

It's only been about two weeks since he entered the school, and in that amount of time he intended to put the class D under his control completely, but I didn't see any bearishness in his remarks.

“It's a little different. I'm saying we can join hands with your class. There will be no top or bottom.”

“This is only an equal relationship.”

It's a smart decision not to let that get to his head.

Nanase only listened to Hosen's words and actions and did not make any particular affirmation or rebuttal. Given that she serves as a bridge and that is the only reason she is called here, it is certain that Hosen is buying Nanase. Did he buy her through a threat or through violence? In any case, there is a chance to get Nanase to our side.

“I know that there are a certain number of first-year students who are still weak-willed and don't care about their classmates. But if you look at us, you'll understand. I'm sure it'll come when you'll need the power of your classmates.”

If you're controlling your class well, it's convenient to use them as tools.

“Let's say that a lot of people obey me with just a single order.”

Hosen pierces his ears with his left-hand finger. Then, with his little finger up, Horikita turned to look at Hosen and said

“In the first place,..”

“Would you stop it?”

Horikita's fist was trembling on her knee without turning her eyes away from him. Sudou keeps his advice and endures it even though he is glaring at Hosen.

For the first time, Nanase opened her mouth to Hosen for the first time.

“I don't think there's anything to worry about Horikita-senpai.”

“Are you the leader of class D or is it me?” Hosen asked Nanase.

And they started talking.

“Then I'll give the leader some advice. I'm not going to cooperate with you people in this equal relationship partnership.”

It's going to be a one-way negotiation.

It is inevitable that a different deal will happen than the one we

planned, with someone like Hosen who wants to protect his classmates somehow and thinks it's okay to cut them down separately. The original penalties are too different, between dropping out and suspension for three months.

“Let's do that. Since that's the kind of person you are.”

“I'm going to ask you...”

“Did you think I'd give you money to ask for your help?”

Despite the imputed disadvantage, Horikita did not show signs of her backing down and showed no concessions.

“I'll listen! I'll listen. We're not going to be to be getting out of here anytime soon, Nanase, order water.”

Nanase nodded and went to order drinks through the landline.

“The deal has been repeated multiple times. I'm not going to give money or anything in return for this relationship.”

Hosen decided there was no point in listening to Horikita and started to stand up.

“Wait, Hosen-kun. I think you should listen to Horikita-senpai's story and reconsider this proposal.”

“Are you listening?”

“It was unnecessary to have come here.”

He was getting ready to leave and saw off the negotiations early.

I don't think Hosen-kun's strategy is bad. Each class continues to be on par like this. I don't know anything, and Nanase didn't seem to want to leave. Even if he's strong, you can make your own decisions, and you may be forced to make concessions eventually. Some students may drop out if they continue to follow Hosen's orders.

“Our senpais are desperate to protect their classmates, and we know what Horikita-senpai wants to say but please reconsider, Hosen-kun.”

Horikita sighs when she figured out Nanase sided with Hosen rather than getting angry.

“Nanase, are you stupid!?” Hosen yelled.

“This is not happening, the negotiation I mean. Now obey me and

leave the rats alone.”

In order to make bargaining more advantageous, the closer the deadlines, the more valuable the second-year students who are left over will be overpaying, even those who can't afford it.

“If you know, say the merit of reaching out to Horikita with this.”

and when Nanase looks at Horikita, Hosen answers this.

“Don't make me laugh, a relationship of trust?”

“In this special exam, we certainly don't think we need to make any concessions. However, it might not necessarily be the same examination in the future.”

“If Hosen-kun were to turn all the second graders to his enemy, there is a possibility that he would fall into an unforeseen situation where no matter how many points he tried to prepare, his partner may end up dropping out. It's still good if you just get penalty points, but what happens if the partner you've teamed up with holds u back?”

“Do you think there's a person in this school that's ready to be with me?”

“I hear that there is something called protection points in this school system.”

This story is a topic I've discussed with everyone in the library on Friday. Horikita was a little surprised, but she immediately grasped the situation and said.

“Yes. It's a special point to disable withdrawal only once.”

“It's not impossible to find information about it even though you just entered the school recently. That's why you should know that if there was a similar test in the future, if your partner had a protection point... In some cases, they can unilaterally force them to drop out.”

The more hated Hosen is, the more aggressive the method is taken to expel him from school.

“That's why we need to build a relationship of trust from this stage.”

“You're getting ready to drive me in, aren't you?”

“Of course, we put the first-year class D as our top priority. And,

because they recognize you as a necessary existence, I do not want you to make this mistake.”

They were in a disadvantage in this situation. The rest is whether Nanase and Hosen listen to this advice.

“I’m prepared for a later disadvantage in the future, but I still want something in return if we’re going to build this relationship of trust.”

“I’m sorry that you got your wisdom together by saying this, but I’m not going to accept this relationship.”

Nanase and Horikita both spit out “Jesus Christ” as a reply.

However, Hosen did not show any gestures of him trying to reconsider this relationship.

Sudou tried to throw a punch at him, and Horikita pulled his arm to hold him back.

“He hasn’t left the negotiating table yet.” Horikita said.

“It’s not easy to negotiate with him.”

“But what are you going to do? I’ll admit that I don’t think this is going to work out.” Horikita said.

“But even so, I don’t think it’s an equal relationship, is it that bad of a proposal? If so why?”

“Why do you dislike the equal relationship condition?”

“We did something like giving them a relationship of trust, even though it’s basically us using each other.”

“That doesn’t mean I’m grateful to give it away.”

It’s a tearful story to say that the first years D-class next year may fall into a similar situation, it’s a selfish prediction and an unsure future, but if Hosen continues this attitude towards everyone else, it will surely happen.

Horikita’s proposal supports each other on basic equal terms, but the second-year class D is seeking salvation.

“Instead of having us drop out, they will save the disjointed situation of the second-year class D. It is insurance so to speak, and there are lots of benefits for them to accept this proposal.”

“Yes, it is.”



“What do you want in return for this equal relationship?”

“Secure a million private points and give it to me right now. If you’re in trouble in the future, we from the first-year class D will be happy to pay it back in full.”

“However, if you do not have the one million private points, I will issue an insurance instead.”

It means that the full amount of points will be in the pocket of Hosen.

“If it’s as you say, trust is going to be important in the future, isn’t it a good deal?”

If there's always a time to ask for help, it's true that this is a good strategy for both classes.

The first thing that happened next was Hosen grasping Horikita’s arm. And Sudou who had been watching the man right next to him and staring at Hosen intensely since the very beginning.

“Oi... Don't hurt the woman.”

“Calm down Sudou-kun.”

“It's okay. The negotiations have not yet been concluded, there is certainly no such thing as a ‘negotiation breakdown’ from the mouth of Hosen. “

“She’s going to do this confidently.”

“You don't even hold back on hurting a woman, or do you think you can hurt anyone you want?”

“Why don't you refrain from making statements that turn women in the world into your enemies?”

“I'll tell you a good deal. If you beat me in a fight, we can have an unconditional partnership.”

Hosen came and said this.

“Then I'll do it for her. You're not complaining, are you?”

“Sudou, don’t get provoked.”

“It's okay Suzune.”

“If I win, the contract is concluded. I can't help it because I'm sick of this douchebag.”

Sudou is reaching the limit of his patience in this karaoke room and Hosen is not showing any signs of releasing his arm which has been gripping onto Horikita's hand for a while now.

"It's too stupid to decide whether or not we can agree on a cooperative relationship in a fight."

Even if it's the only negotiating method, you shouldn't take it.

"There's no problem because it's a good deal, isn't it, Hosen?"

Horikita quietly says her thoughts without listening to Sudou's words.

"I thought you were a little smarter. The first time I showed up to the first-year class D as a second-year, I felt like I wanted to join hands with class D."

If we could have a class-by-class partnership, I could have agreed with that, which would have been great.

Horikita took a deep breath and for the first time without thinking about anything, said "negotiation breakdown," and announces the end of the negotiation in a way that's asking us to withdraw.

At that moment, Hosen, who seemed to be having fun from beginning to end, looked slightly into Sudou's angry face for the first time. By releasing the hand on Horikita which was gripped by him, he also endured his anger and sat down again.

Grabbing a cup on the table with his huge hand, he splashed water on Horikita's face and said,

"You finally said it! That's right. ha ha ha! Yes, yes!"

I was about to jump out of the seat so that I could get near the wall, however, the situation started to move before Horikita spoke out, and Sudou held a fist out on his hand, and this might have been an action that Horikita had not foreseen.

It is because of that. Sudou, who had endured to the limit was going to hit Hosen. Then, Horikita yelled "Stop it!"

No one could blame Sudou who got angry at seeing the woman he likes being insulted, and Hosen was making a fool out of her. If it was

one second later, Sudou's fist would have hit Hosen's cheek.

"Sudou-kun... Don't get baited into his strategy carelessly."

"If you were unhappy with the breakdown of negotiations, you should have said it sooner."

However, did she judge that it was negative, even if she subtracted any more relations?

Horikita took off her gaze off Hosen as if to see through the karaoke room.

"Let's go home."

"Yes, let's go."

It was a surprise but it's Sudou who asked Horikita to go back.

"Ok let's go! Hosen-kun."

Nanase also confirms with Hosen to leave about the same time.

"Ah? I thought Horikita-senpai's dog was going to come at me for revenge."

It's not like we were going to take the bait. And I looked at Horikita's appearance from the side.

The breakdown of the negotiations here is a great deal of damage. But Horikita's expression has not changed to disappointment yet. She still looked like she was still in the middle of negotiations.

## 1

We left the shop with Horikita who paid for the karaoke shop. We thought they were going to leave us alone, but Hosen and Nanase continued to follow us.

Sudou occasionally looks back at him as if threatening him, but he did not complain because the way they're going home is the same as ours.

Did he not understand the situation, or is Hosen trying to call us out to somewhere?

"Wait, let's not waste time. We're done talking."

It seems that Horikita's had enough of talking with them.

"Horikita, just like you said, that day, I went to class D for the first-years. I knew right away that Class D was the lowest class in this school. I knew the quickest way was to join hands with the same D-to-D class than to be joining hands with another class."

"Whether or not this is to form the same equal cooperation as Horikita, this is another matter to take, but why was he doing it? There must be a reason."

"So?"

"So, is it really okay to break down the negotiations?"

"Well yes," since Hosen said,

"As long as you keep making reckless demands on us, it won't change."

"That's right. I'm going to be prepared to get a penalty if necessary."

"All right. So, what about this proposal?"

Horikita, who did not remember resuming negotiations, and Hosen suddenly began a one-sided talk.

"I'll give orders to the class guys. But you have to give me two million points."

"Two million? You've made it clear."

"You're free to say whatever you want. But this is the only way to ensure that you won't be leaving school."

"Many of the guys in the other classes have already decided on their partners. You don't get anything if you're reluctant to put it out there. Or do you want me to crush you?"

"You're going to crush us?"

"You're just going to drop out because you follow by the rules, but you guys can cut corners on tests."

"We don't dare to break the rules."

"Then, we'll just be prepared to score 501 points with any combination."

"We reached a turning point between first- and second-years."

Horikita, who stopped there, turned around and looked at Hosen as he says.

“There’s no such way to win unless you do it with violence,” he says, holding his fist and laughing fearlessly.”

“Domination through Violence...”

“There are people everywhere who think about things like that. Even if you don't like it, that's my way of doing things.”

Then, we stopped at a divided road to split apart. Then, we began to walk again. Horikita did not show a broken expression until the very last minute. Or rather, it might not have been possible to break against Hosen even though he was a tough opponent.

If she breaks it, she will never create an equal relationship with Hosen ever again.

“Wait.”

“Hm? You still have something to say?”

“About what you said—I'll think about it.”

At just the last possible moment, Hosen lets loose a final plead I wouldn't have ever expected.

“What do you mean?”

“It's only natural to negotiate until the very last moment in order to gain an advantage by exerting every ounce of pressure, isn't it?”

Hosen explains that he only used that tactic to force Horikita to give in.

“Then, are you saying you'll participate in an equal partnership between our classes?”

“About that. Since we got a bit of time left, I want have a change of location.”

It could be because we have a chance of being spotted here. It's almost 10:00 PM on a Sunday, after all. Given, most students would already be home, but it's inevitable that someone who isn't might see us conversing in the middle of the street.

“Even so, you can't possibly bring us back to your dorm for a private discussion.”

Given our circumstances, there aren't many places suitable for continuing our discussion.

However, since time is running out for both sides, no one wants to drag it out any longer.

"Anywhere works. To the back of the dorms or some other place, I guarantee it'll only take a few minutes."

Facing Housen's confident air, Horikita can't possibly reject this small offer.

This in itself was the very situation Horikita had hoped for, even though she was the one who broke down the negotiations; at the same time, she was sure that Housen would come crawling back to her.

"...Fine. I'll give you 10 minutes."

"This way."

Housen led us to the direction of what was considered back then as the third-year dorms, but has now been changed to the first-year dorms.

Then, moving around the front of the building, we were taken to the back.

This location is noticeably dimmer than the rest of the dorm's surroundings, being eerily silent, and since nobody would be passing by here unless they were throwing out some trash—which considering the time of day at the moment—this place would guarantee our privacy.

"Let's resume the conversation, shall we? Oh, the conditions on our side stays the same—is that alright?"

"Well..."

Housen lifted his arms in a contemplative stance.

Then, he quickly lowered his arms, then holding it up again, but now with his index finger, middle finger and ring finger held up, forming the number "three."

"Three million points. If you can pay up, then I'll help carry your sorry excuse of a class."

Everyone who was here, including me, was taken aback by this new proposal by Housen.

"What in the world are you talking about?"

It was truly shocking. Even Horikita involuntarily gasped at those words.

The situation was supposed to be Housen trying to salvage this already-broken negotiation, but instead he raised his asking price even higher than before.

It was almost as if common sense was thrown out the window.

“You don’t understand? Well then, to put it simply: give me 3 million points, and I’ll be happy to team up with you lot.”

“You’ve got to be kidding! We already told you we aren’t paying you a single point.”

“Joke? What joke? I brought all of you here for a purpose, haven’t I? I’m completely serious here.”

Clearly, begging Horikita for a second chance worked, as Housen has now turned the situation on itself and made it seem like *he* was the one in control.

“Oh, how naïve of me to believe you were being serious.”

There had been a ray of hope that Housen would make the right judgement, but alas, it turned out to be a mere red herring.

“Hold it. You think you can just leave now?”

Housen slammed his fist against the wall, clearly with the intent of intimidating us.

“Do you actually think your esteemed violence would work on us here.”

“At the very least, I can beat you guys half to death, right?”

“Hmph. So be it.”

Horikita slowly shook her head disapprovingly at Housen, then turning on her heels as she prepared to leave.

She must not have thought in her heart that the other party would actually use force to get her to yield.

However...

Nanase, who was standing beside Housen, turned her face away from us and stepped back.

—As if on cue, Housen starts moving.

“Suzune!”

Sudou shouted in a panic, shooting to Horikita’s side like an arrow and pulling her away.

Then, in the next instant, Housen’s foot powerfully swept the area where Horikita had been standing just a few moments before.

Following that, his huge body rushed towards Horikita all at once.

“...What...!”

At this point, Horikita finally realizes that Housen is serious, but her movements were stiff and she couldn’t dodge Housen’s attack.

Seeing this, Sudou, in the midst of protecting Horikita, blocked Housen’s fist with his own body.

“Ugh!”

“Ha-ha-ha! Let me show you how much my attacks really weigh!”

“That was just in time...! I won’t spare anyone who threatens to hurt Suzune!”

Housen pleasantly laughs as he continues to attack Sudou.

On the other hand, Sudou, who already has enough to deal with, is met with a new rush of attacks.

“What the hell is going on in this guy’s head?!”

Looking at this scene now, there’s no way Horikita wouldn’t be shaken.

It’s true that this place isn’t under surveillance, but no matter how one puts it, if someone sees this, they’ll obviously realize that this is an act of misconduct.

It might not be bad enough to lead to expulsion, but there’s not a chance of escaping punishment in the form of suspension.

“Horikita-senpai, I wonder if the school has changed anything from before?”

Nanase, who is spectating the scene with a cold expression, suddenly opened her mouth.

“Just as you senpais start to familiarize yourselves with the school last year, we first-year students understand the current situation better than our seniors from back then.”



“What do you mean?”

“A few of the first-year representatives were called to the student council room and were given an explanation of the current situation directly by the student council president.

“He said that, from this year onwards, in order for this school to implement the principles of supremacy, the existing rules will be more lax compared to before, and that the school would become more liberal overall.”

“So, are you implying that violence is allowed?”

“That’s not what I mean. But from what Housen-kun told us, a certain amount of strife is normal for students, and President Nagumo assured that he won’t be handing down harsh verdicts on those who do perform violence, as compared to last year.”

In contrast to Horikita Manabu’s antics, who was the previous student council president, Nagumo has higher tolerance when it comes to fighting and disputes.

The student council is the arbiter when it comes to student disputes, and if they allow fights to occur to a certain extent, then it would be difficult to deem Housen’s actions as problematic this time around.

As the conversation between Horikita and Nanase progressed, the duel between Housen and Sudou began to show its sides.

“Oraaaa!”

Housen completely ignores Sudou’s natural strength as he pushes the latter against the wall with his own superior strength.

Then, grabbing Sudou by the collar, Housen picks him up, causing Sudou’s feet to lose contact with the ground.

“Agh!”

Despite being pinned to the wall, Sudou continues to desperately resist, however his efforts bore no fruit.

On the other hand, Housen maintained his steady grip of suspending Sudou from the ground, pushing his other hand towards Sudou as if trying to ram him through the wall.

“You... you asshole!”

Despite being cornered, Sudou grabs onto Housen's arms and kicked his knees with considerable force. Housen's body, which had directly taken Sudou's attack, wavered slightly.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Sudou finally frees himself from Housen's grip, but in the next instant, Housen kicked him. Sudou didn't have enough time to respond and resulted in himself receiving a hard blow.

His body flew to the wall behind him, but even under the heavy impact, Sudou didn't show the slightest hint of fear.

Originally, it was expected that the two would be neck-at-neck, but when it came down to it, there's definitely a very large gap between them.

Sudou is prone to easily making enemies, so he must have fought in countless brawls.

Together with his high physical ability and strong physique that was only further polished through playing basketball, he basically has little to no opponents.

However, this student named Housen is in a completely different league.

I'm sorry to say that the fights Sudou were involved in are tiny compared to what Housen has experienced, given that he did grow up in a harsh environment. The difference in combat experience is clear.

Plus, with that humongous body and muscular arms, one couldn't help but wonder if he really was just a first-year student. With a body like that and being extremely athletic at the same time, he could be considered a virtuoso.

Even Ryuen has stopped fighting against Hosen, precisely because he'd sensed this.

*No normal human being can win head-on against someone with such a body,* were Ryuen's true thoughts.

Despite that, Sudou won't go down that easily. After all, his physical ability is basically second to none in our grade, though it would only be a matter of time before he loses.

Housen swings his fists and attacks Sudou from left and right, without a moment's hesitation.

Sudou desperately searched for an opening, but is unable to do anything as he had to parry blow after blow.

Every time Sudou tries sortie from defense to offense, he'd be met in the next instant by a new attack that would break through his defenses and smash right into him.

"This isn't doing any good!"

Horikita cried out to stop this, but unfortunately, her voice couldn't reach Housen at all. Words no longer work for him at this point.

However, Horikita's voice seems to be able to reach Sudou. For a, instant, Sudou's sight was directed towards Horikita.

The voice, which came from the person he was trying to protect, was like a stimulant that resonates inside him when he heard it.

"Uraaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Sudou lunges at Housen, baring his full intention to fight till his last breath, and with the wall as his spring board, he tried to knock Housen down.

"Yo. Do you want to fight with pure strength?"

Housen took Sudou's punch from the front, then lifting his body up as he laughed.

"Uoo, oh!?"

After that, Housen turned his body around in a half-circle, with his back now facing the wall, which Sudou previously used to conveniently push himself away from. At the same time, he extends his left hand at Sudou, all the while provoking him.

"That wall seems cramped there, eh? I'll let you go, but mind you, I'm on this side now. Come at me, will ya!?"

"Bullshit!" yelled a completely agitated Sudou. However, just as he was about to charge viciously at Housen...

"Hey, Sudou, would'ja look at Horikita's face. She's glaring daggers at you."

Just when the battle is on the verge of a turning point, Housen

unexpectedly taunted. When Sudou received those words, he suddenly realizes that he had lost his cool, and had actually been absentmindedly brawling with Housen.

Obviously, he promised Horikita that he wouldn't do anything rash, but now... Sudou eagerly looked back to confirm Horikita's expression, thus averting his gaze from his enemy, Housen.

Of course, it's true that Horikita doesn't want Sudou to fight someone with such aggressivity.

However, there aren't any intentions of blaming Sudou here. She just had a worried look over her face while pondering on what to do.

Faced with this unexpected situation, Horikita couldn't do anything else but shout at Sudou to tell him to watch out, and could only watch as Sudou showed that moment of laxity—*that fatal flaw*.

He didn't even have enough time to turn back and see Housen's ferocious smile before his cheek received a violent impact—a powerful and heavy attack that was planted right into his face.

Because it was an unexpected sneak attack, the damage it caused is inevitably violent.

Even though Sudou's body was strong and durable, the power of this attack is something he has never experienced before.

If it hadn't been for Sudou, who had a trained body, this strike could have had very serious consequences.

With the blow taken literally head-on, Sudou's body flew backwards, falling hard on the ground without any movements to cushion the impact, then rolling several times before stopping.

“Guh...?!”

Sudou, who is in the brink of fainting from the merciless pain, couldn't even make a discernable sound.

Housen had deliberately set this simple trap up to catch Sudou off-guard, although he has been dominating the battle even without using such a cunning move.

The point? —To inflict severe physical damage on Sudou's body as well as to give him a strong mental blow. Although Sudou is still

conscious, the pain of the blow caused him to writhe on the ground in pain.

After watching this sequence of events, I reconsidered what kind of person Housen really is.

What was he thinking, and what was his purpose for coming to negotiating today? It's true that, as Horikita said, Housen's tone implied the feeling that he was specifically looking for our class—2<sup>nd</sup> year D-class—when we first met.

And just recently, he himself sort of admitted it, saying that he understood the benefits of a direct alliance between our two classes, if we so happen to team up.

Up until the last minute, he has been using this advantage to keep on pressuring us, and there isn't anything wrong with that approach.

However, after witnessing Horikita's tough stance, Housen probably understood that this approach of his isn't going to work.

He could have imagined himself continuing with that previous approach, to the point where Horikita would just give up on joining forces with him.

Even so, Housen didn't make any compromises and forcefully followed through with his policies, which eventually led to this.

First, he splashed water on Horikita's face, and now he's getting into a real fight with Sudou.

These were all actions that could result in suspension or possible expulsion, but even in the face of such danger, why did he continue to maintain such a condescending attitude?

—I kept thinking about these things.

Did he really think he could dominate Horikita through violence and let everything happen according to his heart's desires?

No—this man isn't that stupid.

Then, what was he up to this whole time? What exactly will Housen achieve when this farce ends?

“Now then, the clingy bodyguard is down. Who's next?”

Naturally, Housen turned to face us, taking a step forward. Even after dealing with Sudou, he wasn't breathing raggedly.

"Do you think... that we'll submit to your violence?"

"Ho, then let's just beat you up until you cry, and then I'll let you take a hint. If you still have a tough mouth, I won't let you go, no matter where you run to, until you *die*."

The student council says that fighting is allowed to a certain extent, but *only* to a certain extent, and after crossing that line, it would be considered a problematic behavior.

The note made by forcing the opponent in such a way is unlikely to be effective in the end. In the current situation, Horikita could have faked an act of submitting to Housen, but at the same time, she was unable to do so.

It was because in the face of such an approach made by Housen, it was impossible to give in.

"...In that case, I'll be the one to stop you."

Horikita, who made up her mind, took a fighting stance.

"This is getting real interesting. If you want a fight, then I'm welcome to give ya' one!"

According to Housen, he must have realized that Horikita has some actual experience with martial arts.

But on the other hand, Housen is not an opponent that can be defeated by simply using schemes.

Unfortunately, Horikita hasn't yet understood that.

Immediately, without so much a warning, Housen extends his enormous arm.

Horikita swiftly dodges it and counterattacks by aiming at Housen's jaw, a surefire tactic that she always uses to ensure a clean blow.

However, the victors and losers of this battle is decided in the flash of a lightning bolt.

"Oh?"

—Housen grabs Horikita's outstretched hand with minimal effort.

"Heh, nice move, but even so..."

Rising his other hand high, Housen swings it down with considerable speed, slapping Horikita right across her face.

Horikita tried her best to dodge the attack, but in the face of Housen's overwhelming speed, she took the slap without being able to put up a fraction of a defense.

In the end, her body flew straight back as if she'd been sucker punched. Fortunately, the slap was much lighter than Sudou's near-fatal blow, and Horikita was able to cushion her impact before hitting the ground.

"Su-Suzune!"

Sudou, who is shouting Horikita's name, gritted his teeth as he attempts to stand up.

When Sudou finally stood up, albeit shakily, it's clear that his legs are still weak, and he couldn't even take a step.

"Hey, Horikita, best hurry up and accept my proposal."

Housen threatens as he slowly approaches the fallen Horikita, who glared at Housen as if wishing him a painful death.

"Five million. This way, everything will be settled."

That price is equivalent to a bottomless abyss. There's just no way we can afford that much points.

"Such... nonsense! Ayanokouji, call someone here, quick—a *teacher*! Call a teacher...!"

At this point, such a situation can only be calmed down by seeking adult intervention.

Though, if more students come to our aid, then even if it was Housen, he wouldn't be able to win through pure violence.

"Noticed that you can win and now you're resorting to that? Hah, that's only normal. But do you really think that's the right call? Even if you pin the blame on me for beating you sorry lot up, you can't deny that you also fought back. So, you're planning to get suspended together with me, eh?"

Even if our testimony was of self-defense, there is just no way of avoiding sparks of retribution that are bound to come our way.

But even so, seeking intervention from a third party would be the best course of action, or else this tragic situation will only worsen.

“This bastard!”

“Move it!”

Facing Sudou, who lunged at him again, Housen raised his leg and mercilessly kicked Sudou away. Then, he shifts his gaze to me.

“How long are you going to stand there for?”

“Quick, run, Ayanokouji, run...!”

“Run? Maybe not. If you run, Horikita and Sudou will be even worse off than they are now.”

Even though the situation is rapidly changing, I’m still thinking in my mind.

What exactly is Housen trying to achieve today?

Did he really think he can use violence to make us succumb to his unbelievable conditions?

No—that’s just too unrealistic.

“Horikita, I’ll give you one last chance.”

“Last chance?”

“Either obey my orders and start preparing points immediately, or—I’ll kill Ayanokouji right here.”

After saying that, Housen reaches into his pocket and pulls out something. Due to the dim lighting, it is hard to discern what it is that he took out for a moment, but after Housen removed the casing of the object, a silvery flash of light glared out.

“You... what are you going to...”

“It’s obvious, isn’t it? This is a knife—a *real* knife, not some toy.”

Unlike a toy knife that one would find lying around, the shine casted from the light and reflected off the blade is authentic.

“If you refuse my request, then I’ll stick this into Ayanokouji’s body.”

“Who do you think you’re threatening here?!”

“Not to scare you, obviously. In order to squeeze out those points from you, I’m willing to even go to such lengths, just to get ahold of



those points.”

With a knife in his right hand, Housen starts to walk towards me, one step at a time.

“Too bad I couldn’t figure it out in the end—how strong you really are, that is,” Housen said somewhat impatiently as he stares fixedly into my eyes. “I’ve purposely taken such a big risk to escalate the situation, but maybe it wasn’t even necessary from the start.”

It was as if he was implying that the series of events leading up to today had been for a single purpose—that purpose being to search for *something*, and at the same time also expecting that *something*.

As Housen took step after step forwards, the distance between us slowly narrows.

Suddenly, a figure shot in between us, halting Housen from moving forwards. That figure—

—turns out to be Nanase, who is in the same class as Housen.

“Move it. You’re supposed to be a guard preventing them from escaping, so don’t interfere.”

“I decided to help Housen-kun until the end for the sake of our class, and I was prepared for whatever dirty strategies you decide to put to use, and that I would accept them no matter what. But it seems that I was mistaken.”

Nanase continues to maintain her stance, stopping Housen’s advance as she gazes at Horikita.

“Teaming up with Housen-kun was actually impossible from the beginning. Horikita-senpai, the reason why you came up with the idea of working together with us was because we said something suggestive of your class when we appeared in front of class 2-D, right?

“But from the very beginning, that was just a means to get things to where they are now. Even if you promise us that you’ll pay the astronomical price of 5 million points, it’ll still end up in the same fate.”



Hearing such a shocking truth, Horikita was only shaken more and more.

After all, according to what Nanase said, in this negotiation, Housen never intended to open up a chance for cooperation, no matter how hard we urge him to do so. Of course, it isn't Horikita's fault, because for us, there was no way any of us could have predicted such a thing happening.

Because the information we received did not match up perfectly, this incomprehensible chain of events occurred to us. It must be that Housen and Nanase have obtained information from somewhere else that we were completely unaware of. In that case, fair negotiations would've been impossible from the very beginning.

"Who told you to spill so much? You're annoying. And to think you were the one who said 'leave it all to me, okay?' By taking out Ayanokouji, our class will get a huge amount of points. It's obvious how much good this will bring to us."

"You're right. But I still don't see why Ayanokouji-senpai needs to be targeted like this. He has nothing to do with this at all."

Housen waved his huge hand and slapped Nanase, similar to how he previously hit Horikita.

The scene of Nanase being slapped away played out before my eyes, and at the same time, at this very moment, I finally found the answer. After all, it only made sense that way.

"I'm coming for you, Ayanokouji."

The knife held in Housen's hand is clearly intended to be used as a weapon of murder. All of us, who are present at this scene, naturally thinks that it would be swung at me.

Housen smiled and raised the knife.

Faced with this situation, I leaned forwards as I gathered my last thoughts.

"Ayanokouji-kun!"

In a situation where most people would run away, I rushed towards Housen.

Everyone else probably thinks I've already lost my mind.

I'm facing an armed opponent, yet I'm charging straight at him.

Moreover, my opponent isn't at all an easy person to deal with, but rather a strong and capable enemy.

Seeing my actions, Housen only laughed more hysterically. I'm assuming he's thinking along the lines of, *this idiot is actually lunging at me*.

After seeing me approach him, Housen accelerates his arm to swing the knife down faster.

However, I didn't take action to dodge the knife that Housen is thrusting down.

Because what Housen's small blade is aiming for—

—*it isn't me*.

Rather, it was his own body that the knife was targeting.

I reach out with my left hand to catch the swinging knife, halting its plans from harming its original target.

I didn't try to catch Housen's arm, nor did I intend to deflect his movement.

Instead, I let it *stab directly into my palm*.



“A...What?!”

Housen obviously did not expect me to do such a thing. It's impossible to predict what's going to happen next during that split second.

Who would've thought that someone would deliberately let themselves be stabbed?

The confident smile on his face completely vanished as I blocked the knife Housen was swinging down.

“Ayanokouji... you piece of shit!”

Of course he is confused. No matter who it is, seeing this ludicrous series of actions of mine, they will surely be confused, right?

Generally speaking, this is an act that I would only do if I was completely self-destructive.

Soon enough, blood spurts out from the stab wound.

“This knife, to be precise, this fruit knife—it's *the one I bought, isn't that right?*”

“What are you talking about...?”

“You wanted to stab yourself in the thigh with this knife, which is the one that I bought before. Then, by making a big fuss about me stabbing you, you can use that knife as evidence to get me expelled from school. That's your plan, right?”

Just by seeing the way Housen was gripping the knife, it's obvious that his grip wasn't intended for attacking an opponent. The reason why the blade is facing upwards is to make everything look like it was caused by me.

Also, in order to be able to use enough force when stabbing himself, holding the knife backwards would be the best position.

“Ha— Even though you knew everything, you actually came over to get yourself stabbed. Are you out of your mind?”

Housen's dry laugh had a hint of shakiness in it.

“Because it was the best way to stop you altogether. Won't that make us even? You carried out this plan knowing full well you'll be hurting yourself, didn't you?”

Even if everyone knew of such an effective tactic, this bitter trick isn't something that any ordinary person could imitate. It was precisely for that reason that this method—which can be used to frame me—is established.

“This must be caused by a sort of task similar to that of a special exam, handed out to a very select few of you first-year students. As for the details of this task, then if we take Nanase's words into account, it should be something along the lines of *'expel Ayanokouji from school.'*

“First, you lured us into this secluded spot, then started a violent fight. After that, using the farce that you planned, I was doomed to play the role of the one who was overwhelmed by his anger from the sight of his classmates being hurt, and in the setting, I hid a knife on me just in case, so when I supposedly stabbed Housen with it when I lost control, I'd be expelled from the school. That should sum it up.”

Even if it was said that there is a high amount of tolerance for fights, by the time a knife is introduced, the nature of the situation wouldn't be to the extent where a mere suspension could solve.

And it may not just be expulsion—it could even be considered a criminal act, which may or may not land a spot in jail.

“I've heard that you weren't an ordinary guy, but I never felt any of that extraordinariness from you, and to be blatantly honest, I had been looking down on you. But in the end, this happens... how did you know that the knife was yours?”

“I've done some background searching. Up until yesterday, I was the only person who had bought this very fruit knife. Since that's still the case, now that someone else is holding the exact same knife, I'd naturally know that it's the one I bought, right?”

It would've still been easy to dodge the knife and take hold of Housen's arm. However, that won't completely solve the problem. All Housen would have to do is make a bit of distance between him and myself, and then continue on with his original plan. That's why, if I wanted to stop Housen in his tracks for good, I have to cripple his plans

from the root itself.

He wants to pull his hand away from the knife, so I tighten my grip and took control of his fist even harder.

“You... what are you?”

After sensing my strength, Housen’s confidence was completely blown to smithereens.

“You should be thinking of what to do next, you know? Even though this knife is mine, you’re the one who ultimately stabbed me with it. Plus, I also found out that you had tried to buy this very knife before. Just so you know, if you don’t come up with a reasonable excuse, you’ll be expelled from school sooner or later.”

In addition to my own fingerprints on the hilt of the knife, Housen’s fingerprints should be present there as well. Adding with the fact that the palm of my hand was stabbed, it definitely can’t be a justifiable testimony. I didn’t think Housen’s plan would end with a self-inflicted wound.

“So you’ve seen through it all, up until here. No wonder you did such a thing...”

After giving me a hard glare, Housen forcibly lets go of his grip on the knife and increased the distance between us.

In my palm, only the small knife was left behind.

In this way, the situation was completely reversed.

Horikita and Sudou also took this opportunity to catch their breaths and slowly stand back up.

“A-Are you okay, Ayanokouji-kun...?”

“Ayanokouji...”

“Don’t worry.”

The two’s thoughts must still be in a haze, but now isn’t the time to worry about that.

The most important thing right now is to keep Housen under complete control.

“How much information do you bastards actually have? Nanase, you didn’t spill anything, did you?”



“I didn’t say anything.”

“It all started when I was shopping at Keyaki Mall with Amasawa, which during then I felt a slight inconsistency.”

“Amasawa-san? You’re saying that she had something to do with this?”

“Correct. According to the shopkeeper, Housen was about to buy a knife when Amasawa saw him and stopped it. You were the one who came up with the plan, but Amasawa must’ve tweaked it even further. If you had bought the knife yourself, you would have been found out at the end. But on the other hand, if I were the one to buy the knife, everything would be completely different.”

Furthermore, this specific fruit knife must’ve been picked because it’s the only one with a sheath.

Apparently, the existence of this fruit knife was just right for Amasawa and Housen’s plans.

The knife comes with its own sheath, and while it is true that there exists alternative ways of wrapping up the exposed blade, it would be more convenient to just buy one with a sheath already there, considering its portability.

That day was when the suspicions started. Then, on Friday, Amasawa said that she forgot her hairband at my dorm room, and used that excuse to come back to my room, but it was all a farce to cover up her stealing the knife from my kitchen.

It’s likely that she left it behind on purpose or completely forgot about it. For the next step, which is stealing the knife, Amasawa was also very careful, delaying her movements until the very last moment, because if the whole process was rushed, I would probably notice something was off.

Finally, Amasawa took the knife out of my room without leaving a single trace behind, then handing it over to Housen.

If the knife thievery had failed, I’m sure they would have had to delay the whole plan.

“How blatantly gullible of me to have worked with a woman that I

barely even knew. No wonder it all came apart like this.”

“You’re wrong. Thanks to Amasawa, this operation of yours took shape nicely. If it had been just you alone, you’d have been exposed.”

“Whatever. The situation is already in your control, Ayanokouji... *sen~pai.*”

The blood that splattered out from my wound also stained Housen’s clothes. He no longer had any escape routes.

Even if he did forcibly retrieve the knife and stabbed his own thigh now, he would no longer be able to gain a complete victory.

And even if he does intend to do so, I’ll just have to use my full strength to stop him.

I think even Housen, who faced me head-on, could understand that.

The important thing now, however, is what comes next.

“We—and by that I mean Horikita, Sudou and I—can guarantee that no word about this incident will spread.”

“What do you mean? Are you letting go of this trump card? You can easily expel me from school right here and now.”

“But that’s up to me to decide. I have two conditions.”

“Two?”

One of them is already known without having to really explain much about it.

“Together with Horikita, we’ll establish an equal relationship of cooperation between the two D classes.”

“To obey you, or otherwise face expulsion. And then? What’s the other condition?”

“I want you to partner up with me for this special exam.”

From the first time I met Housen, I thought that if I were in a position where I could freely choose who I could team up with as I pleased, I would undoubtedly pick this guy.

There are several reasons for that, and the most important one was that he was acting ostentatiously and didn’t care about getting attention

around him. If I were in Tsukishiro's shoes, I would have given him an order to not draw any attention to himself at school.

Also, if the negotiations between him and Horikita break down this time, then I would have considered the action of contacting him directly alone, and from that point of view, this series of schemes from their part would have saved me some precious effort.

“...Seriously?”

“You just started school, and there are still lots of things you can do here. If you do leave school now, it'll be over before you can enjoy anything here. Regarding you and Ryuuen, I don't know the details about what happened between you two in junior high school, but if you do leave this school, then the rumor of your rivalry with Ryuuen will forever remain a rumor. You'll be branded as nothing more than that. At least from what I've seen of Ryuuen from the past year, his strength can't even compare to the current you.”

“You...”

It was inevitable that this man, named Kazuomi Housen, had an extremely thick ego.

Because he'd always believed himself to be the strongest.

Despite the fact that he could beat Ryuuen in physical ability, he ended up being told that he was a league beneath Ryuuen, and for Housen that was certainly intolerable.

And what's more intolerable for him is that I'm pointing this all out.

Housen has an evaluation of B+ for his physical ability, but if he deliberately lowers the score by one point, I won't be able to escape expulsion. But I don't think he's going to use such a last-stand method to get revenge on me.

All in all, there's an extremely high possibility that Kazuomi Housen is clean of any White Room relations, but there's no way for me to be 100% certain.

Dwelling on that point further, even if I do try to find out more about him, it wouldn't be of much help. However, everything changed just now. Even if he did spill everything by then, the fact that he

stabbed me with a knife is set in stone.

As long as I shake this matter out, everyone will clearly notice the difference in the nature of things, so that the school will intervene to investigate the entire incident and focus on Housen's motives for deliberately scoring 0 points.

Then, Tsukishiro won't be able to make a move to immediately expel me from school.

No matter how Tsukishiro intends to use it, I just need to firmly block all possibilities of dropping out from school.

"Incredible, really fucking incredible, Ayanokouji-senpai. This is the first time I've met someone who makes my blood boil so much. Just defeating you by force won't be enough for me anymore. I'm going to fuck you over until you're broken inside *and* out, so just you wait."

The slightest hint of wavering that had been revealed from Housen before vanished, as if it was a thing of the past. At this moment, Housen had already switched gears, thinking about the forthcoming battles.

"I'm going to stay here for a little longer. There is something I need to tell Ayanokouji-senpai."

"Huh? What are you planning, Nanase?"

"I'm making this call for the sake of our class 1-D. As things stand now, I'm sure the animosity Ayanokouji-senpai and Horikita-senpai hold towards our class is already very strong. If that's the case, why don't we just drag the other classes into this as well? I think it'll be better for us."

Although we still don't know exactly what Nanase is saying, Housen accepts this proposal from her.

"Suit yourself."

At the end, Housen was the first to leave the place, heading back towards the front of the dormitory.

We were left behind together with Nanase.

One or two stories is bound to spread if someone saw this scene, but there was something that needed to be done first.

It was to calm Horikita who was lacking calmness by looking at the knife which was stuck in my left hand.

“What should I do? Well, I should probably pull the knife out first.”

“Are you okay?”

Horikita, who was usually cool and calm, is not calm at all right now.

“I’ve never seen this situation before in front of my eyes.”

There’s a possibility a large amount of blood will pour out if I pull it out poorly.

“No, it is already looking bad for the time being, but it is better to remain stuck.”

“Compared to your injury, I’m as good as unscathed.”

“Oh...I’m fine, too.”

When Sudou also walked beside me, he distorted his face when he saw the devastation on my left hand.

“How can you stay calm in such a state?”

“I don’t know, I wonder why.”

I caused this on my own, and there was no special reason.

“Why didn’t you fight back, you’re strong...”

“I couldn’t do anything, so I took the knife by force.”

“.... I didn’t see it that way.”

Sudou gave a frank impression between the encounter between me and Hosen earlier.

Horikita takes out her cell phone with her right hand and made a phone call to Chabashira-sensei.

“I have something to do with you. I’m behind the first-year dormitory, so could you hurry up? Confidentially, of course. And

bring me a bath towel.”

“In the meantime, it's better for you not to move.”

“It's annoying to move and let other students see this hand.”

“I don't care, anyway... Nanase did not show any upset when she saw this situation.”

She looks at the knife and the scattered blood on my hand.

I don't feel her being sorry for me at all.

“Can you tell me something, Ayanokouji-senpai?” Nanase says.

“If we don't work together, it's going to be a bad situation for my class.”

“You were aware of this kind of development... Isn't that right?”

“Yes, it was. The aim was to let Hosen stab me and make him drop out.”

“You explained this in such a usual polite tone despite hurting yourself.”

“Are you saying all of that negotiation was acting for this?”

“No, that's not true. It is true that I wanted to work hand in hand with Horikita and support each other's classes. Simply, my strategy of getting Hosen as my partner was my top priority.”

Both Hosen and Nanase were going to be attached to the second-year class D because I was enrolled here.

“Why would you do that? Depending on the situation, I'm also thinking about reporting this incident to the school immediately.” Nanase tells Horikita that.

“I think there was a problem with the way we did it, but it wasn't against the school's intention to get Ayanokouji-senpai to drop out of the school. I still know only a few first-year students who know about this, but I was told I could get a lot of points by expelling Ayanokouji-senpai.”

At last, the reason why I was targeted by Hosen became clear.

“We were told that Ayanokouji Kiyokata of the second-year class, for students who drop out of this person will be paid 20 million private

points. That's the reason we were given such a special exam."

"I can't understand what you're talking about. Who decided on such an unreasonable and stupid special exam?"

Nanase became quiet when she was asked that question.

"...For the time being, I told you what I needed to tell you. Ayanokouji-senpai should be wary of all the first-year classes except ours."

Nanase did not say much but conveys the minimum information necessary to tell us. Not to mention that not only Hosen and Nanase, but Amasawa also knows about this. If you think about it in order, you should know some of the students in first-year class B and first-year class C should already know about this.

"Are you not able to be convinced by such an answer?"

"It's okay. Even I could understand the situation, Nanase cooperated enough."

"I cooperated with Hosen-kun knowing that it would be good for the first-year class D."

"In fact, if the 20 million points were put into the hands of other classes, we would be at a disadvantage. I'm grateful."

"If you think of it as a ticket to class A, it's only for one person. But considering things like this special exam, the more money you have, the more advantageous it is."

"But that's not the only reason as to why I helped Hosen-kun."

"I just didn't think that Ayanokouji-senpai was the right person to drop out of this school."

Soon Nanase bowed her head and left.

## [ EPILOGUE ]

### PROFOUNDING MYSTERY

On Monday of the following day, Nanase and Horikita had a discussion and succeeded in establishing an equal cooperative relationship yesterday.

On Tuesday, all 157 pairs were completed, and everyone focused on the written exam. Koenji did not show any willingness to cooperate, but when Nanase went directly and asked him to become a partner, he accepted it surprisingly easily.

I was surprised at this point, including Horikita. My left hand was deeply wounded, but it was worth it. Many students were surprised by the bandage on my left hand, but I was able to trick my classmates by following Chabashira and Mashima sensei's lie, and thanks to that, they were able to take a special exam without increasing the number of people who knew why my hand was hurt.

For the past two weeks, I've had many opportunities to interact with first-year students, but in the end the white room student that was sent to expel me was not found.

When he took no action during this special exam, I doubted if he really existed. I would normally consider Hosen from being the white room student, but I still cannot confirm that. In other words, it was possible that he is a fake who came into contact with the real Hosen and began to plan his strategy before enrolling in this school.

Nanase seems to have no poison at first glance, but there are still elements that cannot be overlooked, such as how to close the distance between us, the attitude she had after the karaoke room, and the fact



that it may have been a calculated contact since the very beginning. Amasawa is a cautious person who teamed up with Hosen to try to expel me, but this was also a convincing strategy if it was for 20 million private points. To anybody, this is something many people will be interested in.

There was no evidence of this white room's student existence.

If he can manipulate the situation behind the scenes as well. Such a situation might endanger me in the future

And... Today, May 1. The time has come to know the results of this special exam. At the end of the day, the last six hours were set up to make the presentation.

"We are going to announce the test results for the special exam. It is displayed on the blackboard, and it also displays it all at once onto your tablet so that you can see it in detail at hand."

I could see that Horikita's gaze was directed at me. There is no doubt that this special exam was the highest difficulty ever in the sense of getting a high score.

There was hardly any chance we were going to tie.

On the day of the written examination, Horikita's best subject is "Mathematics" which she has designated as a match with me. The screen switches and the test results are projected on the tablet.

Many of the students didn't look at the other numbers, so they went to check their scores first. On the other hand, I did not look for my score, and looked at the dropouts who grasps the situation in the class.

"It looks like they've managed to get around it."

In another way, the lowest total score was 579 points. It's was hard to get through this exam without being in danger.

They lower ability students have succeeded. Of course, the students were working hard, but the school did not hit a tremendous level of difficulty in the special exam in early April. The actual test problems were also no problem for students like Ike and Sato who were able to score more than 250 points without difficulty.

In other words, the prediction score table according to the academic ability that we were showed at first was only intentionally low. A sigh of relief and a voice of joy can be heard one after another from the surroundings.

Well, I'll check Horikita's score. I sort by mathematics then displayed them in order from the highest score students.

As expected, the only subject we had the game on. Horikita scored 87 points. I looked at Keisei's next with 84 points, you don't even need to know how much he was studying.

Then, students whose academic ability is generally close to A have followed, but 80 points are common to all subjects as a big barrier.

The class was full of joy, but I could see that it gradually turned into a buzz as people were whispering with each other.

Of course, There was no need to know what the noise was about. Chabashira-sensei and the people who noticed the fact all looked at me.

If you look at my name engraved above the 87 points from Horikita, on the math test, it would be impossible.

“A perfect Score?!?”

“Are you serious?”

No matter which subject anyone looked for, there were no students in the class who have scored more than 90 points. Except for one subject, my math.

By the way, about 70 points were set aside for other subjects. Many students would not have understood why I had a perfect score.

This written test was a few steps more difficult than I had expected. The risk of getting a perfect score was high, but I didn't dare to cut corners.

It was inevitable that the attention will be drawn throughout the school and my classmates, but if I think about Tsukishiro's behavior in the future, it would be safe to show a glimpse of my strength from here on.

Rather, it was possible for me to score higher since the problems

were all answerable, since Tsukishiro can't get his hands on the written examination papers, it's better for me score higher anyways.

Sudou, who would usually make a fuss with the class, stared at me quietly, even though he was surprised at Hosen's and how he became my partner on the other day's incident. With that in mind, the surprise should have been less for the other students.

At any rate, the situation has begun to move greatly in April.

And now, I'm sure the students are giving me weird looks and are likely to ask a lot of questions. I'll just have to be prepared to answer them, I guess.

## 1

There were no students who could talk to me because we were in class, but after school it was different. At the same time as Chabashira-sensei was about to end the day, it was Horikita, The Ayanokouji Group and Keisei that came to me.

"Kiyotaka, you're a little too good."

Horikita, who had been silent for a while, confirmed that there were no people around her, and I left the classroom with Horikita. In addition, I subjected attention from not just Airi, but Keisei as well.

"I'm not making excuses. I did what I could do and got a satisfactory score."

"You don't want a rematch?"

"I could not even understand the last question on the written problem sentence. When it came to the measuring theory and Lubeg integrals... something like that, I couldn't even answer the question. It was on another level, maybe even a question for those in University."

The circumstances around it were not very detailed, so the question could not be answered.

"Even if I say that I have been learning since I was a child, I still couldn't answer that question."

"...Okay, I know I am stupid."

Like giving up something, Horikita sighs strongly, and looks at me with a glistening eye.

“It’s frustrating, but I admit it. There have been two things that happened in a row that I can’t help admitting defeat to you in. If I lose any more, my pride will hurt even more.”

It was Horikita who did well to the fullest, but it seems it will be counterproductive even if I praise her now.

By the conditions of the agreement, and since I won the bet...

“Ayanokouji, Are you here?”

Horikita who was about to talk about the student council. Got interrupted by our homeroom teacher Chabashira-sensei as she seemed to have come looking for me.

“What can I do for you? Chabashira-sensei.”

“I’m going home for today. I’ll talk to you later.” Horikita was helpful in that verse as she left.

“That’s a very cold reaction. It would have been hard the other day without my help.”

Horikita thought that she could not talk about the bet in front of Chabashira-sensei and showed the attitude to leave. Chabashira-sensei turns around to me after seeing off Horikita.

“I seemed to have disturbed you, but I’m in a hurry. Acting Director Tsukishiro is calling you.

“I see.”

Chabashira-sensei walks a little forward as her back was turned towards me, and then she said,

“I’ll tell you, according to Mashima-sensei, there were no unusual moves made by Tsukishiro.”

“He did it, before the test, it was a stage to prepare it.”

“What are the chances of this coming out of the hard line in the future?” Chabashira-sensei asked me.

“What do you mean?”

“The incident about the knife stab. Isn’t that your father’s doing as

well?”

“This hand has nothing to do with him.”

We have not specifically reported this incident to Chabashira-sensei. Of course, the same is true for the 20 million private points.

“I hope so, but I think I might be able to restrain him from forcing you out of school.”

“We also need manpower.”

“Don’t worry about it. It’s fine, as long as Mashima-sensei and I are around. This time you got a perfect score in mathematics, and I was able to tell you were serious about aiming for class A.”

It was a perfect score with many disadvantages, but there seemed to be only a few students who could get a perfect score.

Soon I arrived in front of the Arts room.

Then, leaving behind Chabashira-sensei, I went into the Drawing Room.

“Thank you for taking the trouble to meet me, Ayanokouji-kun.”

“What do you mean? I came because you used my homeroom teacher.”

It does not put out to say that Chabashira-sensei was forced to bring me here. It directs a mysterious situation that I was suddenly called by the director.

“I can’t go to the classrooms as the acting director.”

I was prompted to sit down, but I did not obey and stood still.

Confirming my actions, Tsukishiro began to talk.

“It’s almost the end of April, and did you get a chance to find out who was the student I sent in?”

“If you found out the white room student's identity, you’ll have the upper hand.”

“I don’t know who you sent from the White Room.”

“It’s pretty easy, isn’t it?”

“I’m not sure. At least in this situation.”

“I see. That child was able to hide well.”

Tsukishiro whispers as if to admire the student he sent in and

nodded and gave a satisfied smile.

“I didn’t feel any sign of the white room student coming into contact with me. You cleanly erased the student.”

“For the last few months, I’ve been working hard to becoming a normal high school student.”

“Did you get the most out of it in advance?”

“I did not.”

“In exchange for that, you seem to have had a lot of trouble on the beginning of your school life. Language, attitude, way of thinking, and how to spend time. There was a lot of unnaturalness in all of them.”

Tsukishiro laughs funnily as if he had seen all of it somewhere nearby. It looks like it’s just teasing, and he’s appealing that he was in control of everything.

“The reality of you as a typical high school student is only an imaginary image.”

“For the time being, I can’t see through Ayanokouji-kun. Let’s just say that’s good, because I confirmed that I don’t mind going down with you.”

Tsukishiro urges me to leave the room in an attempt to end the conversation. There was no sign of him asking me what had happened to my left hand... I continued to talk with Tsukishiro without changing my position and moving.

“Deputy President Tsukishiro, did anything happen by any chance?”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“It’s already May. Didn’t you say you wanted to settle this in April?”

“You don’t have to be impatient. The grace period I’ve given you is longer than I thought.”

“Is that so? I thought that it happened due to ‘unscheduled’ trouble.”

“You say interesting things. Do you have any grounds to prove that statement?”

“At least this special exam, I felt like I was well prepared to drop

out of the school. All that was left was for the White Room student to come into contact with me and partner up with me. However, there were no students in the first grade who showed such movements.”

Of course, there was a possibility that I already saw him at the assembly, but the contact of that degree was not included in the students I suspect.

“I don’t think there are any white room students in the first-year, at least I’m tempted to think so.”

“Don’t you think so too?”

“I knew through the OAA app that you wouldn’t have a partner until the middle of the game. But you are a special person. I judged that it was dangerous for you to find out about the identity of the white room student if he just came up to you and asked if you wanted to partner up with him that easily. I thought it would be wiser for him to aim for you on the next special exam.”

“It’s going to take a while.”

“Maybe so.”

“Contrary to the speculation of Tsukishiro, the person from the White Room did not follow your instructions. When I think about it, that’s the only explanation.”

“Not at all. You have an interesting idea.”

Tsukishiro drank tea from his cup that was prepared, and his eyes narrowed.

After a slight silence, he released the cup from his mouth and placed it back on the table.

“I don’t want to be asked to be credible in my words, but I admit it. It is true that this time I had a plan to make sure you dropped out. But he ignored it.”

At first, it was Tsukishiro, who denied it, but he quickly changed his choice and admitted it was true.

His still a child, so if he’s simply in his rebellious period, he’s still cute, but if he was not, you might not be able to get the last laugh.”

The student who was ordered and sent did not follow the instructions sent by Tsukishiro.

Certainly, it is true, that I will not be able to laugh.

“Be careful, Ayanokouji-kun. I’m not the one who decided to send the white room student this time. And there’s a risk that he is already beginning to act on his own without following my instructions.”

“Isn’t what he can do on his own limited?”

“Maybe so. However, the instruction I received from your father is still your withdrawal. Even if he is used as a piece for that, he will still move to the end as I instructed, and if he fails, he will be truncated. Until I move to the next phase.”

Tsukishiro and the white room student were thought to be monoliths. However, it has emerged here that they might not have a very good relationship. But if this story is true, what’s the point?

It’s possible that I can increase the probability of me working with him in order to remove Tsukishiro from his position as the acting director.

Or is he faking it to deceive me?

The white room student... is behind the scenes, and he’s pulling the strings.

As for the probability, it might be a 50/50.

It was important for me to be conscious of mocking Tsukishiro, who is known as a man who deceives every person he knows.

At least this man did not look like he was impatient nor upset.

“One last thing... If he ignores even your father’s wishes, in some cases, he might be happier to choose to drop out. The more time he wastes trying remove the white room’s best work, the more jealousy and hatred he will give you. It’s horrible just to imagine what you’re going to do to convince him.”

On the back of this serious advice that could be taken as a joke from Tsukishiro, I left the drawing room.



### Special Examinations and Overall Rankings:

**1<sup>st</sup> place:** Class 2-A; 725 points

**2<sup>nd</sup> place:** Class 2-C; 673 points

**3<sup>rd</sup> place:** Class 2-D; 640 points

**4<sup>th</sup> place:** Class 2-B; 621 points

### Class Points as of May 1<sup>st</sup>:

Class 2-A, 1,169 points—led by Sakayanagi Arisu

Class 2-B, 565 points—led by Ryuen Kakeru

Class 2-C, 539 points—led by Ichinose Honami

Class 2-D, 283 points—led by Horikita Suzune

# [ HORIKITA SUZUNE SS ]

## WHAT ABOUT MY HAIR?

I've never been in such a great mood ever since leaving my house this morning.

Everyone who recognizes me keeps gossiping about my hair.

It's normal for people to cut or grow out their hair.

This shouldn't be such a trivial thing.

However, students of the other classes reacted pretty well to the change.

The problem, though, is that when I arrive at my class, the reactions of my classmates are the strongest.

"Su-Suzune...? You—this—your hair...what happened to your hair?!"

Sudou-kun, who was jovially chatting away with Ike-kun and the others, abruptly said out loud when he noticed me.

Kushida-san, who has an avid animosity towards me, seems to have reacted similarly.

"Horikita-san, that's...a really crude change to your appearance. I'm so surprised."

"What's so strange about a simple haircut?"

I directed my question to Sudou-kun, who pretty much had the strongest reaction to this change.

"No—that's not it. It's not so strange as it is surprising... Huh, with just a single haircut, your image can change so much... Well, I'm not saying that it doesn't suit you. In fact, it does suit you. ...Yeah, short hair is fine. Isn't that right, Kushida?"

This haircut altered my image quite a bit. That's inherently true.

"Yeah, that's right. I think it suits you. But... what happened?"

It seems that Kushida-san is more interested in knowing the reason for my haircut than the physical changes that were brought from having said haircut.

I don't know if this will serve as reference for future prospects, but it's safer to note this reaction down.

"What do you mean, 'what happened'?"

"Let's just say... it was due to a breaking of ties, something like that."

"A breaking of ties? So does that mean a b-b-break up?"

It's merely the sign of my newfound determination—a way to say farewell to my past self. By no means was it due to a broken heart.

They seem to have interpreted it with outrageous reasoning, so I immediately dismissed their claims.

"If you insist, then it's more of a sign of my determination."

I know this is selfish of me, but I want to refrain from having the words "broken heart" tarnish one of the best memories I have with my brother.

"Yeah, that's right... it's definitely not a breakup, right?"

"Since we're second year students now, us of Class D will be fighting to climb up the ranks. For that, I want to give it my all."

That's right. I...want to be the one who carries this class and lead everyone forward.

Eventually, I will definitely move up to Class A—

With my hand, I lightly touched the tips of my short hair, which swayed listlessly. My resolve only strengthens from here on out.

# [ NANASE TSUBASA SS 1 ]

## WHAT HER EYES REFLECT

For a bit of time now after I exited my dorm, I've been observing the students going to and from school.

In this school, first years to third years all lived in the same area.

Moreover, the fact that there were no children nor adults present here made me realize that, once again, I'm in a special environment that I've never experienced before.

Would it be possible to live every day peacefully in a place like this?

There's one thing I'm sure of, though—that I haven't experienced anything like this in my life before.

I wanted to keep savoring the view of the hustle and bustle in front of me, but I couldn't.

That's because I noticed the figure of Ayanokouji-senpai.

From this distance, it seems like he hasn't noticed me yet.

Also, from the looks of things, he is focused on the pair of people in front of me, who were first year Class A girls.

It's possible that he already knows the two have already partnered up with somebody else, and is hesitating to ask for their cooperation.

This can potentially cause his ties with Class 1-A to deepen, which wouldn't be the best for me.

I approached him, adjusting my pace to match Ayanokouji-senpai's as I briskly walked nearer and nearer.

“Good morning, Ayanokouji-senpai.”

Using the most casual way of greeting a person, I caused his attention to shift to me. I think the smile I made on my face was

compelling enough.

“Ah, good morning.”

He seemed to be at a loss as to what to do about me, which is probably because of him previously being unaware of my presence.

“Do you have business with the two girls in front of us? Let’s go say hello then, shall we?”

Even though I knew the proposal would be brushed off, I still said it anyway.

“It’s nothing.”

“Is that so.”

After receiving an answer that I fully expected, I stood next to Ayanokouji-senpai and continued walking.

The feeling that Ayanokouji-senpai exudes was really unique.

Rather than being completely invisible, it feels like he has a dull aura, yet sharpened to the very maximum at the same time.

Just touching it with my finger would cause a deep wound to form... At least, that’s what I thought of it.

But that’s why Ayanokouji-senpai is a special person, right?

Whether that’s good or bad, there’s only one thing that matters to me.

“I’m sorry for what Housen-kun did the other day, what he did was quite rude.”

“No, I wasn’t directly harmed, so I can’t really take your apology.”

“But I’m apologizing for the trouble he’s caused anyway. I’m sorry I’m not strong enough to stop Housen-kun from doing what he did...”

It’s mandatory for him to deepen the relationship with Class 1-D through proactive participation for this special exam.

In that case, he might even ask me to form a group with him.

No...at the moment, this possibility is still infinitesimally close to zero.

It’s still only a matter of speculation as to how much I’ve considered is correct.

At any rate, I will continue to act without showing any unnatural

movement. That way, my seniors can naturally talk to me.

“Have you decided on a partner candidate for this special exam?”

Avoiding unnecessary talk, Ayanokouji-senpai took the first step.

If Ayanokouji-senpai really was a special person, he should have learned about my situation in the OAA by now.

“Me? I haven’t decided yet.”

“So has anyone made contact with you as of late?”

This is merely casual talk, right?

“In fact, yes. Two Class A and Class C seniors approached me.”

“Why are you hiding something in your reply?”

Why did I hide information? Well, simply put, that’s just my personal policy...

“Sorry, but I can’t answer that.”

Of course, at this point in time, I can’t tell Ayanokouji-senpai yet.

“It’s only natural to refuse answering questions that you preferably don’t want to answer; no need for apologizing.”

It’s something that I can’t answer, but Ayanokouji-senpai seems to have known that already from the start.

“If possible, can both D-classes cooperate to find suitable partners for each student?”

Following that, a breath of fresh air came.

“Cooperation between classes...?”

Of course, that’s what I’m hoping for. If Ayanokouji-senpai hadn’t brought the topic up, then I would’ve taken the initiative instead.

This first contact could be considered a success.

As the appearance of Ayanokouji-senpai is reflected in my eyes, I thought deeply.

This person really can’t be judged by their appearance alone.

Such a feeling reverberates strongly inside me.

[ KARUIZAWA KEI SS ]

## SOME ALONE TIME JUST FOR US TWO

On Friday night, I went to my boyfriend's room to have some fun. No...it was to study.

"Girlfriend going to their boyfriend's room" would normally make your hormones run a bit wild, but this time, there was no such mood.

It really felt like an extended version of normal school life, which is kind of a shame.

However, I'm not upset, not at all. This time I'm spending alone with Kiyotaka is precious.

"By the way, I have a question."

"A question?"

"You'll be teaching me, but Kiyotaka, your academic ability is a C, right? Although it seems ordinary, in reality...you can get a higher grade, right?"

"You said it, pretty much."

I've had a vague awareness of Kiyotaka's high intellect.

However, I can't at all guess just how far his intellect goes.

If he's good at his studies, then wouldn't it be better to just show it without any hesitation, so that people would think more highly of him?

"Why did you hide the fact that you're strong from everyone?"

"I just didn't want to draw attention to myself, so I don't force myself to stand out so much."

That's a really good reason. If that's the case, then I guess it's

understandable that he's been keeping a low profile so far.

"Then, how many points do you think you can get if you actually do everything you can?"

"Let your imagination run wild for that."

Let your imagination run wild—I just can't help but smile at his cool calmness.

"Come on, don't make it harder for me, just say it~"

This is a question only I can ask, and an answer only I can receive.

That is because we're special... Yes—this is the so-called relationship of a couple.

I guess Kiyotaka couldn't argue with my pestering, so he made a proposal to me.

"If you properly attend the study session tomorrow, then I can't not tell you."

Horikita-san and the others were leading that study group. I've been told several times that they wanted me to attend.

Though, I've been running away from them, and never attended their study session once. But I do want to study, and I need to get ready for my upcoming exams.

"I'll go, i'll go. I feel like I'm in a crisis after listening to Kiyotaka's lecture today."

That's right. If I fail this special exam, then i'll be forced to drop out of school.

I don't want something like that to happen right when we started to go out with each other.

I think my heartfelt words reached Kiyotaka, and he answered my question.

"Let's not talk about how many points I'll get, since I've already decided on how much I will score on this exam."

"Say what? I don't understand."

He didn't say "How much I plan to score," but rather "How much I will score." That's pretty confident—and impressive at that.

"—400 points."



His answer was simple, but to me, a score like that seemed hard to achieve.

“...Really? 400 points seem...”

I tried to remember what Chabashira-sensei told us.

“That should be around a grade of A.”

“You... can you really get any score if you wanted?”

Generally speaking, such a grade couldn't be achieved with a miniscule amount of hard work.

In other words, if his opponent was Yukimura-kun, could Kiyotaka rival him in his studies?

“Of course. I've never had a problem I couldn't solve before, ever since I started school.”

I can't anymore. My understanding just can't keep up with his words... It really is too much.

What's strange is that, when he said he'd score “400 points,” he gave an oddly specific number. Would that mean he could control his score however suits him?

And, ah, this answer sounds like, “I can even get a perfect score if I do my best...”

It's just that this answer is so out of touch with reality that I can't keep up with him.

It's hard to imagine Kiyotaka lying, but right now I probably have a skeptical expression on my face.

“It's because you fully grasp the current situation that you have a sense of crisis regarding your exams. You should concentrate more on your studies.”

In short, since Kiyotaka is good at his studies, I should follow his advice properly.

But I don't have a problem with the idea of studying with Horikita and the others.

“Then... I suppose I'll study here for a while before I go back.”

Yeah, I think I'll be able to study hard with my boyfriend by my side.

“I seen. Then, let’s start at a faster pace.”

Kiyotaka kindly granted my small wish.

I leaned forward as he opened his notebook to start teaching me.

“Come here, come here.”

“Huh?”

If I’m going to be taught anyway, it’s better to just sit next to me than face-to-face.

I patted the open floor next to me to welcome Kiyotaka over.

“Sit next to me and teach me.”

Kiyotaka didn’t say no. Rather, he slowly sat down next to me.

The scent of Kiyotaka’s body wafted out in the gentle breeze.

I was so happy about this that, for a moment, I thought it didn’t matter whether I studied or not.

But once again, I tensed by nerves and threw myself into my studies.

In order to have a fulfilling school life with Kiyotaka in the future, I have to do what I can now.

# [ NANASE TSUBASA SS 2 ]

## THE HEART'S VOICE

“Horikita-senpai sure is busy.”

I muttered, my eyes simultaneously following her back as she gradually moved away from our seat in the library.

“If we’re going to unify the classes, then that means we’ll have to do it as well as possible.”

“I wish I could be such an excellent second-year student when I’m older...”

“How are you planning to persuade Housen to come? Horikita didn’t ask you about that in detail.”

It’s not that big of a problem for me. Though, now that Horikita-senpai isn’t here, I might have a chance.

“About that... I can answer, but please, Ayanokouji-senpai, tell me something about yourself first.”

“Something about myself?”

“Horikita-senpai is the leader of your class. However, Ayanokouji-senpai isn’t, right? So, senpai—what kind of person are you?”

I almost unconsciously—or, as one would say, uncontrollably—asked this question.

It was clear that I shouldn’t pursue the question any further, but inside me, I genuinely wanted Ayanokouji-senpai, who was gazing at me silently, to give a answer. Thus, I continued to speak with a strong will in my words.

“You can’t answer me?”

What I wanted to know was “What kind of person is Ayanokouji-

senpai?”

I think I may have chosen the wrong way to ask, so he probably didn't understand my question...

“Nanase, it seems that the question you're thinking of asking isn't my relationship with Horkita.”

He replied back to me, sounding as if he understood exactly what I wanted to ask.

Since I've already come this far, I suppose I just can't help but get to the bottom of this.

Even if it's brute force that I will have to use in the end, I have to dig it up no matter what.

That way, I'll be able to get the answer I want to know right now.

“That's right. I've always thought that Ayanokouji-senpai might be an evil and dirty person.”

Usually, people would get angry when someone says something like that to their face.

However, Ayanokouji-senpai didn't even raised an eyebrow after hearing that.

It was as if he was trying to figure out the intent behind those words.

But then I gradually regained my composure.

I realized something—I've only just met him, and it was a bit hasty to ask such things.

“From the way I've been getting along with senpai so far, I think Ayanokouji-senpai is an ordinary person.”

“Does that mean you've always seen me as an ordinary person?”

“...No, that's not what I meant.”

Now that I've dug too much to the core, I'm now taking a strategic retreat.

Knowing full well that my imprudent statement at this stage would not be beneficial, I...

“I'm sorry, but please forget about what I just said. What's important right now is whether our classes can cooperate with each other.”

I was mentally prepared to be pressured by him, yet he didn't delve into my question.

Was it because he understood the intent of my question? Or is it...?

# AFTERWORD

In 2020, I was able to see you safely again this year. I am Shougo Kinugasa, the author of Classroom of the Elite.

Happy New Year. Somehow safely, it became the first release of the second-year edition! It is also the release date of the second collection of real art books to be combined with the release of the first volume of the second grade. Thank you very much. From the end of the month, we are also going to have a second-year advance commemorative event, so we are looking forward to visiting the event venue from all over the world, and the advertisement is also sometimes sandwiched!

Well, it is in the new series to be commemorated, and it has started to move in various ways than ever. I'm going to attack Ayanokouji, who was just in the first grade. Shall I not come? It was decided to cut 1P for postscript on top of using. It often writes anyway, such as the appearance of the life of the last minute, and the change by becoming the maximum page second grade pupil as permitted by the standard, and the grade of the new arrival Hosen and others also come to be able to see the sign of growth here and there.

This time I was not able to talk with you guys a lot because the number of lines left is small, but by that I can meet you again soon, thank you again. SEE YOU SOON NEXT TIME!

# CREDITS

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